THE PURPLE LIGHT OF LOVE

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The Purple Light of Love

BY

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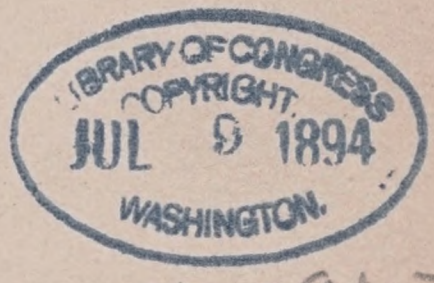

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NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1894

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The Purple Light of Love.

PART I.

JOHN EDGAR, like young Lochinvar, "came out of the West" and settled in New York. He had received an excellent collegiate education, and had graduated from his law school with honors. His home had been a happy one—that is, as happy as a home can be where light-heartedness and a cheerful enjoyment of life are considered incompatible with true religious fervor. His father and mother looked upon the commandment "Keep holy the Sabbath day" as a greater law than the one that reads

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Their small minds ran to the details of their religious belief, and his father was a veritable compendium of scriptural quotations and religious "Don'ts." The dining-room was decorated with a worsted appetite destroyer which commanded all to "Waste not, want not, grumble not." Over the drawing-room door was suspended that time-worn invitation to the Great Father to "bless our happy home." One of John Edgar's earliest recollections was having been severely whipped in the "name of the Lord" for inserting the prefix "un" before the word "happy" in this oftentimes ignored request. His three sisters were, like their mother, physically and morally upright to the point of unattractiveness. Each was a dull, colorless girl, and reminded one more of the tart persimmon than the lus-

cious peach. These were the women in whose atmosphere John Edgar had been reared up to this time. Once, and once only, had he determined that some women were queen magnets in the world, and were possessed of a power over men that at times became supreme. On this occasion, having arrived at the mature age of fifteen, in full view of the whole Sunday school, actuated by a desire he seemed to have no power to control, he had deliberately bent forward and kissed his pretty teacher full on her rosy lips.

It was shortly after this that he decided to leave home and accept his father's invitation to attend a college in a distant State. His inability to interpose a proper defense to his action with the school teacher made his sisters insist that their parents should relieve them of any possible contami-

nation which might result from their living in sisterly intimacy with a low libertine.

At the present time John Edgar had been ten years practicing law in New York city. He was thirty-three years old, but already an authority in railroad matters. His inside knowledge of these affairs, even when not employed as counsel, enabled him to speculate most intelligently, so he was now a person of property as well as parts. He had been a busy man and a taciturn man; clever undoubtedly, not particularly sympathetic, as his own success had made him a disbeliever in luck, and most appeals to one's sympathy come from those who insist they are hounded by relentless bad luck.

During these years he had had little inclination for wine and song, and for women he had had no time.

There had been few bits of color in his life, not even the light and shade that a keen sense of humor brings to its possessor. He took life and himself both seriously.

John Edgar was not strictly handsome, but was a distinguished-looking man. His features were contradictory. His face in repose was hard, but when he smiled there was something very human in it.

The few times he had ventured into society he had practically confined his conversation to men and married women. The only house he really went to with some mild anticipation of pleasure was on Sunday evenings, when he occasionally dropped in to one of clever Mrs. Worcester's receptions, composed of the under crust of society and the upper crust of Bohemia. Here he would with unconscious intuition talk to the clever

ones and ignore those who simply posed as such, and here he heard good singing by women of many grades of position; but the fact that the notes he heard were purer and truer than the lips emitting them was of no more importance to him than to the others.

One morning—it was about the first of August—he stood in his law office on one of the top floors of the Foreign Insurance Company, looking out of the window at the river and harbor below. In his hand he held an open letter which he read with a questioning frown.

"NEWPORT, R. I., ELM HOUSE.

"DEAR MR. EDGAR: I have a few friends stopping with me. I want one more. (He is reading this letter now.) I know all about law courts; they are all closed. New clients, just at present, are as rare as—well, as—unselfish men. You are debating in

your mind what to do to be saved from yourself; and lo! I step in and cry, Come to me and be amused. Leave on the one o'clock train Saturday, and you will have an hour to dress for dinner. It is high time you became less of a lawyer and more of a man.

"Yours sincerely,

"SARAH WORCESTER."

Edgar stood thinking for a moment; then, seating himself by his desk, he wrote:

"DEAR MRS. WORCESTER: You are right; you generally are. I am getting to be too much like a legal phonograph. I spent a good many years reading law into myself, and I have made considerable money talking it out. I have no doubt that there are other things in your world better worth seeing and doing than in

mine; so I shall take the one o'clock train on Saturday, as you suggest, *for your* world, and hope to find it as interesting as I know it must be to have engrossed your attention for so many years.

"Faithfully yours,

"JOHN EDGAR."

"Well, that's settled," he exclaimed as he rose from his chair. "I feel as if I were about to turn a corner in my life. I should like to have a peep down that new street; perhaps it is just as well that I can't. One thing is certain, if I don't like the looks of it I'll turn back."

Saturday afternoon found him making his bow to Mrs. Worcester on the Newport wharf. As she lay back in her Victoria, it was easy to perceive that she was a buxom old lady, with a twinkle in her eye and a

general appearance of never having been bored in her life. Even her dear departed considerately arranged the details of his "taking off" just as she was beginning to tire of him, leaving her a fortune of generous proportions to do with as she pleased. The fact that she perceptibly rouged, and that the massive coil of hair that was attached to the back of her head had been worn by some other lady whom she had never met, never caused any one to doubt Mrs. Worcester's sincerity. She always maintained that every old fright was in duty bound to make herself as presentable as possible, by fair means or foul; to remind youth of age was a crime, and to improve on Nature when Nature had ceased to improve on you was common sense, and common sense was next to godliness.

"Well, here you are, Mr. Edgar,

and I am delighted to see you. What do you think of the delicate attention of my driving down to meet you? If it does not flatter you, nothing ever will. My dear, we will be talked about! Won't that be refreshing? And I shall be the first woman your name has been associated with. Picture my pride—but jump in; the dinner can wait, but the horses won't."

"One moment, Mrs. Worcester. What about my trunks?"

"Trunks! Mr. Edgar, ah! how can you be so cruel? *Boxes*, Mr. Edgar, *boxes!* Your boxes will be all right; I have had them attended to." With that they drove off, when Mrs. Worcester, in consternation, cried. "But, your man! Where's your man?"

"Man!" exclaimed Edgar, "why, I am my own man."

"But you must have a valet; all men have valets nowadays."

"But I don't need a nurse, Mrs. Worcester; the last one I had was a rugged, rawboned Western woman, for whose memory I do not entertain one iota of affection or respect. Why should I replace her after the lapse of so many years?"

"But it amounts to eccentricity," said Mrs. Worcester, with a smile about her lips, "and eccentricity is bad form. The principal object of a man servant is to provide something with which the maid servants can flirt. But, never mind; when you return to New York, remember to invest in one."

When dressing for dinner that night Edgar could not help noticing the luxury of the appointments; that his "boxes" had been unpacked, his shirt laid out, with the studs in the buttonholes; that his shaving apparatus was ready; that his silk socks

were not to be sought, but were resting most intelligently by his shoes; and Edgar saw that it was good, and felt that it was good, to have a male nurse; and he appreciated another side of life he had never envied before.

The dinner itself was composed of a series of little messes that tried Edgar's patience if they did not appease his appetite. He began to think lovingly of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, and a bottle of Bass, and wondered if society were toothless, and so ate nothing substantial.

The guests were the usual social humming birds, gorgeous of feather and small of intellect, but with an instinct that makes them know honey when they see it. Of course, there was a dubious German count, and a French author in whose books there was no one chapter that could have

been read aloud with safety even in this somewhat advanced company.

Mrs. Worcester said she "liked to have a few foreigners about, they throw into such pleasant relief the clean minds and nice manners of American men."

As for the people stopping in the house, Mrs. Worcester had refused to tell him anything, saying "he must form his own opinions."

He took into dinner a Mrs. Barnard, a young widow of about twenty-seven years of age. She had married an old man for his money, but he promptly lost most of it in Wall Street, and then died, leaving her with an income just large enough to clothe herself fashionably, with the exercise of some economy. As for her looks, suffice it to say she was beautiful; as for her character, the reader must judge for himself. They were hardly

seated when she turned and, looking him straight in the eyes—she had a way of looking up or down into men's eyes that made them nervous as to whether she might not read the thoughts with which her proximity generally inspired them—said:

"I feel greatly relieved. The doctors say it is very bad for me to have my curiosity remain unsatisfied long, and naturally I *was* curious"—this with a smile—"for I had never seen one before."

Edgar knew little of women, but he knew no woman could have the face, form, and coloring of Mrs. Barnard without being a power among men for good or evil. Her first words puzzled him.

"Never seen one before!" he echoed. "And what, Mrs. Barnard, is it you see now and never saw before?"

"What Mrs. Worcester calls you—a

misog—I can't pronounce the word, but I know it means a woman hater."

Edgar laughingly replied: "But I assure you Mrs. Worcester is mistaken. I am no woman hater. I don't know enough about them to tell whether I should like them or dislike them. I have never had the time to find out."

"Really," said Mrs. Barnard, with a slight arching of the eyebrows, "I did not know that men had to make time for the study of women. I had rather supposed that women took what they wanted and that men made time for other things."

"That would naturally be your experience," said Edgar with a little air and grace that quite surprised him.

"Well, you must begin with me. I quite long to be studied. Besides, I am just the human book for beginners. I am positively alphabetical, I am so easy to read and to know."

"I am afraid it would take courage to open that book, and still greater courage to put it down," murmured Edgar.

"The proper answer to that must be: If thy heart fails thee, read not at all."

Here Mrs. Barnard turned to the man on her left. His name was Arthur Overman. His face was as handsome as his temper was ugly. He and Mrs. Barnard had seen a good deal of one another for the past three months. Before Mrs. Barnard could speak Overman turned, and, looking at her with a curious expression of half love, half hate in his face, said:

"I congratulate you; you seem to have him well hooked already."

"I don't understand you."

"Yes, you do, Rosalie, perfectly."

"For goodness' sake, man, don't call

me by my first name here, at a dinner; somebody will hear you."

"Well, what if they do? Haven't I advertised myself as being in love with you sufficiently for all the world to know?"

"Yes, I dare say. But I have not advertised myself as being in love with you, and a woman is not supposed to accord such a privilege until she does; besides, I only meant to permit you that honor once, and that was on an occasion when you looked so earnest, so sad, and, to be truthful, so handsome I could not refuse you."

"Oh, very well, Mrs. Barnard; just as you wish. However, what I want to know is, what you intend to do with that man when you have him in the condition in which I am now?"

"I have no intentions in regard to him at all," answered Mrs. Barnard,

cutting short a sigh that was meant to seem a yawn.

"Yes, you have, and I know it, for you acted with him as you acted with me when first I met you. I was watching; I saw your bosom rise and fall; I saw you look at him as if you had never seen a man, as if he were the first to awake your consciousness to the existence of another sex; I saw your eyes tell him what it was too soon for your lips to speak; I saw—and I know. And though I will bear much from you, as I have borne in the past, I won't be driven in double harness with another poor fool."

"This is what is called tearing a passion to tatters, to very rags! Is it not, Mr. Overman?" The voice in which this query was put was suggestive of a cool, temperate breeze, and seemed to lower the fever in Overman. "Besides," she continued,

"I should like to know by what right you presume to criticise me. I am not in your power in any way that I know of, and I am not your wife, so please remember hysterics in a man are unbecoming, and unasked criticism is distasteful to me. Would you mind giving me an olive?"

At that moment had Overman's heart been upon his sleeve it would not have been a pretty thing to look at.

After dinner Edgar talked with Mrs. Barnard for an hour; then she sang, and the room was filled by the music of a voice that it seemed God must have given to a mortal by mistake, intending it for one of his own choir. It was rich and round and came without effort, and Edgar's heart beat time, and he felt suffocated and oppressed with it all. To him she was, as some one said of France,

an "absolute monarchy tempered by song." It was to him as if he had dropped from some other planet, where all was cold, gray, and silent, into a new world where all was warmth, color, and sweet sounds. The curtain seemed to have fallen on his intellectual side and risen on his physical self.

That night he smoked a long time alone. First he wondered how it was that a woman whom he knew intuitively was not wholly good could have such a voice. Then the picture of her as she stood by the piano with her head thrown a little back, her body swaying slightly as she sang, her eyelids pressed down a shade with weight of feeling, came before him, and he stirred uneasily in his chair. He remembered the look she gave him as the last note died away, and he rose and walked quickly up

and down the room. After a few moments he sank into his chair again and said to himself:

"Now, this is rank nonsense. I am a lawyer and supposed to be logical and analytical. Let us look into the thing and see what has happened. Well, first, I am a different man from what I was yesterday; I have discovered pleasures and sensations in life I never knew existed; I have felt more and thought less than I ever did in the same time before, and one person, and that person a woman, seems to fill the whole foreground of my existence. The cause for this change is the woman above referred to. I don't like the effect she has upon me. I am not sure I like her. I fear if I saw much of her I should make her a present of my will. The miller that buzzes too long about that lamp would not only singe his wings, but

commit his whole soul to flame. In fact, I am afraid I have turned a corner, but it is too soon to decide whether to go on or to turn back."

The next morning Edgar drove down to the Casino with Mrs. Worcester. The avenue was crowded—men in flannel suits and straw hats were driving light two-wheel traps in every direction; girls, sitting as erect and driving in as good form as the family coachman, were tooling their ponies along in perfect style. The sun, which had been behind a fog for two days, seemed to shine with redoubled vigor, as if to make up for lost time. All was life and gayety; even the cut flowers in the florists' windows looked up to the sun and smiled a welcome, for they knew their time was short, and the absence of their idol had seemed long. As they entered the Casino the band was

playing one of the songs Mrs. Barnard had sung the evening previous and Edgar's heart gave an extra thump as he recognized it.

"Come here; I want to talk to you a moment alone," Mrs. Worcester said as she led the way to two chairs beneath a shady tree.

"Do you know I am not altogether sure I did a wise thing in asking you up here? It is just like a man to do what no one expects and the reverse of what one would prophesy. Gracious! but you must be very inflammable! Now, don't look as if you did not understand a word I said; you know perfectly well what I mean. Here you've only known Mrs. Barnard about fifteen hours, and you're more than half in love with her already; and she is the last woman I should have ever expected would attract you. Now, don't deny it. What

is the use? But let me tell you, my dear boy, you must look out—have your wits about you—and make up your mind what you want to do. If I did not want to marry, or I did not want to be unhappy, I'd go back to New York, if I were you, before any more damage is done. Furthermore, don't be so stupid as to be angry with me for speaking so plainly. I am an old woman, and I have cut my wisdom teeth. I know very little about Mrs. Barnard's real character. She is a woman who never talks about herself to other women, in which she is quite right; however, I know I should prefer to be her friend than her enemy. Nor do I understand why she keeps that man Overman forever at her heels. He hasn't got a penny, and she hasn't enough for two. She can't marry him, so why doesn't she dismiss him, unless, after all, she is really

fond of him? I asked him up here at her suggestion."

Edgar's face had been a study for the last five minutes. First he was surprised at what he thought was Mrs. Worcester's marvelous divination, then a little annoyed at the privilege she had permitted herself, and finally pleased that there was some one he could talk to about her; but at no time did his face express the same interest as it did when Overman's name was mentioned. This was a revelation. Oho! there was another man, and a handsome one at that! Somehow the thought made him sit up very straight. Turning to Mrs. Worcester, and entirely ignoring all that she had said at first, he inquired:

"And have you any other reasons for believing that Mrs. Barnard is fond of Mr. Overman besides the sim-

ple fact that she permits his attentions?"

"Oh, my! oh, my! what have I done?" exclaimed the old lady. "This is simply dreadful! Here you are not only going to have trouble with your heart, but you're jealous, too. Dear, dear, this will be no drama in which for me to have a part. It's sure to be a tragedy. Please, Mr. Edgar, I resign my *rôle* of leading old lady, and will take a seat in the orchestra if you don't mind."

Just then a man by the name of Philip Truxton came and spoke to Mrs. Worcester, and Edgar had no chance to answer. This Truxton was the only intimate friend that Edgar had. He had met him when he first came to New York; and as they were both great workers in the same profession they had many things in common, and entertained for one another

a very honest regard and admiration.

"Hello! you here, Edgar? A drone bee playing butterfly! Why, I am delighted! It's time you looked about and saw a little of the world," said Truxton cordially.

"Yes," interposed Mrs. Worcester, "I have heard some people call this world a ball of mud, but, I assure you, it has on its surface many fair women and many brave men; and, unless one's disposition is a mixture of wormwood and gall, it's a very nice place to live in." Then, turning to Mr. Truxton, she added: "I am sorry I can not bring you home to lunch to-day, but we are all going to lunch and sail on the Seneca. Come in to-morrow, won't you?"

"I will, with pleasure." And Truxton joined the lawn-tennis players.

"I like him," remarked Mrs. Worcester.

"So do I," answered Edgar.

"He looks sensible."

"He is."

"He would not have fallen in love with Mrs. Barnard."

"Why, has he bad taste?"

"Oh, you're incorrigible! Come, let us join the others."

The Seneca was one of the largest steam yachts afloat, owned by one of the most interesting men in the yacht club. He was unmarried; but knowing ones declared that they could name five women who had proposed to him, and been refused. As the gig containing Mrs. Worcester and Edgar pulled up to the gangway the shapely head of Mrs. Barnard could be seen bending over the side. The moment they reached the deck, and had

shaken hands with their host, Mrs. Barnard asked:

"Where is Mr. Overman?"

"He could not come, my dear; he had already pledged himself to lunch with some one else before we received this invitation. I wish you could have seen his face when he realized what had happened—it was almost as black with rage as, for some unknown reason, Mr. Edgar's is at the present moment bright with pleasure."

Mrs. Barnard smiled a conventional smile, but did not look pleased, as she knew Mrs. Worcester meant her to understand that she had "taken notice." Mrs. Barnard was dressed very simply in something blue and white, and her ivory, opaque, veinless skin stood the test of sunlight so well that it was a pleasure to look at her. If the evening previous she had been

suggestively Oriental, this morning she was refreshingly Puritanlike; and Edgar found it impossible to decide which way he admired her more. All he knew was that it was a superb day; that the sky was an inverted bowl of blue, with a big brilliant diamond in the center; that every one looked happy; that his heart sent his blood surging and bubbling through him whenever he came within a certain radius of a certain woman; that he was exhilarated; and that he thanked God he was alive.

The yacht sped up the bay, where the water was smooth. Mr. Euston was too old a hand at entertaining to endanger the enjoyment of his guests by a trip outside into a rough sea. When Edgar found Mrs. Barnard again she was seated on a pile of soft cushions away aft. Some man was by her side, but their conversation

did not seem animated. When Edgar approached she turned to the other man, and said most sweetly:

"I am awfully sorry to trouble you, but won't you get me a glass of water?"

Then, when he was gone, she turned up her face to Edgar, and said, with a look as though she were a little hurt:

"Aren't you going to speak to me to-day?"

"Why, of course," he answered, immensely pleased, "but the other man will be back and claim his seat; there is only room for one."

"And if he does, it will be occupied."

"Well, won't that seem a little rude?"

"Rudeness does not consist in taking advantage of a man, but in not taking advantage of any offer made by a woman."

So, with a laugh, Edgar dropped by her side. Just then back came the glass of water, carried by a man who looked as if he would like to take his usurper and drop him quietly overboard somewhere near the screw.

"Ah! Mr. Tracy, thank you so very much; you are the essence of kindness." Here she touched her lips to the glass, and, with a side glance at Edgar, added: "You see this rude Mr. Edgar has taken your place; but you must come back after a while and reclaim it, or my vanity will receive a fatal blow."

Edgar was speechless for a moment, but when Tracy had disappeared for the second time he managed to exclaim, "Well, upon my word!"

"Well, what are you surprised at? What do you expect of an intelligent woman? I wanted to talk with you

for a time, and here you are. It was better that he should think you rude than me, and he does. My invitation to him to return pleased him more than anything I would have probably said if he had stayed. He will come back and say unpleasant things about you, and I'll defend you; in the meantime you're happy because you wanted to be with me. It strikes me this is all very reasonable, and you should be filled with admiration and not with surprise at my cleverness. Come, tell me what you think of the little book you opened last night. Do you think you will find it pleasant reading?"

"But, Mrs. Barnard, I have only had one good talk with you, and it is too soon to hazard an opinion."

"Oh, I didn't want an opinion, only a guess. You see, you've been watching me—I know that—and I think you can learn a good deal more

about people by watching them at first than by talking to them. You see, as far as you are concerned, they are a little off their guard."

"But they can't be off their guard if they are conscious of being watched, as you admit."

"Oh, how very literal! I very much fear, Mr. Edgar—mark you, I only say fear—that you are a little obtuse."

"I am not generally considered dull," Edgar answered, "but I am willing to admit that when I am with you I seem more heart than brains. There are times, I imagine, when the silence of the heart is more eloquent than the wit of the intellect."

"Heavens!" thought Mrs. Barnard, "this man is not apt to lose time! He is going to be painfully earnest and direct." But to Edgar she only turned a sweet, sad face, and

said: "Ah, Mr. Edgar, I am not clever like you. I don't know things as you do; I can only guess at them. To me the heart and the brain seem one and inseparable. Where I gave one I should give both. But tell me something about yourself. What manner of man are you?"

Here Edgar told her the story of his life, and she saw the man for the first time in perspective—what he had been, what he was. To her it was like looking down through a tunnel of ice. It was all so cold and colorless. Then her turn came, and she told him how young she was when she married; how her mother, since dead, had urged upon her this step; how, as her life had been loveless, she took it without regret. Her husband had been kind, but her married life had been so short and uneventful that it seemed to her like a

vague memory of an incident she had experienced in another world.

Edgar was touched, but, like all intensely honest people, clever or not, he could tell whether others were also sincere; and he felt rather than thought that the pathos of the tale did not ring true. However, they got along famously, and Edgar realized that her power over him was vastly on the increase, of which fact she also was far from unconscious.

Just then up bustled Mrs. Worcester, saying: "So we have monopolies in society as well as in business; you two should be ashamed. 'Let your light so shine' for all, not for one alone.—Gracious! I'm afraid that's a religious quotation, and it's such bad form to be blasphemous. But I didn't mean to. That's a child's excuse, but I can't help it. Come, now, and let me introduce you to some other peo-

ple; we are almost home, and only have a moment."

It was lucky they were almost home, for as Mrs. Barnard started to rise a clumsy sailor up aloft let slip from his hand a heavy block, which struck with a resounding blow on Mrs. Barnard's foot. With a cry of pain she fell back on the cushions. Then followed great excitement.

"Is there a doctor on board?" was asked by every one. No, there was not.

"Take off her shoe," cried one.

"Don't touch her shoe; it will serve to keep her foot in shape till a doctor can properly examine it," advised another.

"Now, just do, please, all of you, go away," said Mrs. Worcester. "Mr. Euston, won't you ask your guests to go forward and play jackstraws, or anything they like, and

send somebody here with a little brandy?"

But Edgar had already slipped away, and was returning with the brandy at the moment. Mrs. Barnard was not the kind of woman to faint, though she was in great pain; she would have liked to have cried a little while, she suffered, but her eyes simply filled with tears, which made them look to Edgar like monster sapphires set in diamonds.

"Can you walk to the cabin, dear, do you think?" asked Mrs. Worcester.

Mrs. Barnard tried, but the pain was too great; so she lay back again on the pillows, a little pale, but to Edgar, of course, more beautiful than ever. Mr. Euston had the yacht headed direct for home. He also had a chair rigged with ropes to one of the yardarms, so when they an-

chored, Mrs. Barnard was very comfortably and carefully lowered into the gig. Mrs. Worcester and Edgar went in the same boat. When they reached the clubhouse Mrs. Worcester suggested that two of the sailors should lock hands and make a chair, but Edgar's look of horror at the thought that any common sailor should come in contact with such loveliness silenced her. When the gig drew up to the float, Edgar, looking into Mrs. Barnard's eyes, asked, with a slight tremble in his voice, "May I carry you?"

"Yes," she murmured.

He stooped down and carefully lifted her; as he raised her for greater support she threw an arm around his neck. It was lucky Edgar was a man of considerable self-control or he might have dropped her. He was shaking with excitement. As he

walked to the carriage he smiled grimly as he thought of his sisters' faces could they see him now, but to him it was a journey like the path to heaven. He placed her gently in the carriage. She whispered in his ear, her mouth so close to him that he felt her breath:

"Are you always so kind as this? Some woman is to be envied."

Then in jumped Mrs. Worcester, with a curious smile on her face and they were away. Edgar went back to the clubhouse and took the biggest drink of his life. On his way home he stopped at a florist's and bought some flowers. He had intended to get violets, as they were his favorites; but somehow Jacqueminots seemed more suitable to her. By the time he reached home the doctor had been there, made an examination, and declared that there were no bones bro-

ken. The instep was badly bruised, and it would be some days before Mrs. Barnard could use her foot. Edgar was delighted to hear this, and so for that matter was Mrs. Worcester, who had no great desire to have any one laid up in her house with broken bones for half the summer.

As she said to one of her cronies: "Of course I am pleased it is no worse for her sake, but I am greatly relieved on my own account also. You know how dreadful it is to have people ill in your house; it demoralizes the servants so. Then there is the doctor running in and out, nasty medicine bottles about, calf's-foot jelly here, port wine there, and the general odor of a hospital everywhere. Oh, I've been through it once, my dear, and I have no desire for a second experience."

No company was expected to dine

that evening, and so it happened that when Edgar went into the drawing-room he found Overman there alone. As he entered Overman rose and, with mock ceremony, said: "I make my obeisance to the hero of the occasion."

"I am not conscious of having done anything heroic," answered Edgar, slightly nettled.

"I hear you carried Mrs. Barnard from the boat to the carriage. You must be quite proud of your strength."

"I am not aware it requires much strength to carry an ordinary woman such a distance."

"I doubt if Mrs. Barnard would be flattered by being described as an ordinary woman," said Overman with the suggestion of a sneer.

"You know I meant simply a woman of average weight."

"I don't find anything 'average' about Mrs. Barnard."

"Look here," said Edgar, thoroughly aroused and taking two steps forward, "perhaps while you're 'finding' things you'll discover a reason why you permit yourself the privilege of discussing Mrs. Barnard at all. I decline to say or to listen to anything more."

"You may have to some day," muttered Overman.

Edgar was cool in an instant. "'Have to,' Mr. Overman, will be a new sensation for me. Perhaps I may enjoy it; but I shall never have an opportunity, I fear, until 'have to' means the same as 'wants to.'"

At this point Mrs. Worcester sailed into the room and grasped the situation at a glance.

"Are the windows opened?" she exclaimed; and, seeing that they were

not, she added: "There is an air of arctic frigidity about this room that I don't like; perhaps you two men are responsible for it. If so, please don't let it occur again. I am afraid of cold draughts."

There was a moment's silence, then the others came in and dinner was announced.

That evening Edgar walked down by himself to the Casino. It was a subscription-night dance. He stood in the doorway and gazed listlessly about. All the women seemed so insipid as compared to her; they were pale flowers, she was ripe fruit. He realized that until his love for her was conquered or blessed the world might be womanless and he neither know nor care. One thing amused him as he looked about, and that was so far as the attention that he attracted or any notice which was taken of him

was concerned, he might as well have been invisible. Society has only eyes for itself, and until one has become a factor in it Society remains unconscious of the existence of any one outside its own membership. He lighted a cigar and strolled home.

"Yes," he admitted to himself as he walked along, "I love this woman. Whether my love is just the feeling I anticipated it would be when my time came, I can not say—I doubt it. However, there is the fact. Now, the question is, shall I permit this love to continue and grow, or shall I leave here, go home, and crush it out? If I could win her, could I make her happy, or would she make me miserable? Surely, in so short a time love can not reach such gigantic proportions as to outmatch one's self-control —the growth of years! Can one learn in a few days something that it

will take a lifetime to forget? It does not seem reasonable. It can't be true! I do not feel as if I were past redemption, and I do not feel as if I could make the woman care for me in the way or to the degree I should wish. Better go home, my boy, and start fresh. You turned your corner sure enough, but you said if things looked dangerous you'd turn back. Now they not only look, but are dangerous, so I shall go home to-morrow. How I do hate to leave the field free to that man Overman! However, I am no dog in the manger."

With which culmination to his reflections Edgar threw his cigar away. For some moments he stood on the lawn facing her windows, through which he saw the light, with a very brave face and a very sad heart. Something in his throat choked him. "Am I right, after all?" he thought.

"Which way lies my happiness? Bah! this wavering is only because I have come nearer to her. The secret of her spell is propinquity, but this is a battle where it takes more courage to run away than to stay. Good-night, my beloved. I will call you that once, anyway, and so to bed."

Mrs. Barnard had lain on the sofa in her own room all the evening. She also wanted time to think. Mrs. Worcester had run in once or twice with a word and a smile, and, finding Mrs. Barnard was in no pain, had flown to the conclusion, in her own quick way, that a little self-examination on the part of the invalid would be a very good thing in its way. She liked Edgar, and would have enjoyed marrying him off to some sweet girl that would have been proud of him and made his life peacefully happy. For him to marry Rosalie Barnard

would have been, according to her notions, like throwing a lump of ice into a furnace. There were depths of Edgar's character she had not fathomed.

The truth was that the young widow, looking the picture of grace as she lay fanning (the very movement of her fan was like a caress to the air), had had a hard life. Her father had always been poor, and she hated poverty and its privations. She married her old husband simply for his money and of her own free will. When he lost it she could hardly believe him. He stayed away from the house—poor old man!—for three days before he could make up his mind to tell her. He had made the saddest discovery a man can make in this life shortly after his wedding. His flattered vanity had led him to believe he had won his wife, whereas he had only

bought her. On the third day, up through his troubles and disordered brain, burst that bud of illusion—Hope.

"She may love you a little," it cried. "Go to her—go to her. Tell her how you will begin again. Tell her how you'll work and slave, and how you love her."

He went, and with his old eyes dimmed with trembling tears and his old heart big with the flower of hope, he told her. Not a word from her lips; she only looked. And his eyes grew dry and the rose of hope bent lower and lower till it buried its face in the earth and withered. What could he do but die? His soul went out in silence. She never spoke; she stood at his side and watched the ashy dawn of a new life spread slowly over his wrinkled face.

"Oh, if God will not pity me,

what shall I do? Oh, Rosalie, I'm so sorry, so sorry!"

Still silence—then death.

Rosalie was not so brutal as her behavior would lead one to suppose. His news had simply frozen her, and he died before she could thaw. The sudden discovery that she had thrown her passionate life away for nothing had dazed her completely. To her it was too awful, too hideous for words. There had been many times since then when she had felt lonely and friendless and would have been glad of a kind word from any one, but she always remembered she had given no quarter in this world and must expect none. She had had, of course, more than one chance of marrying since her husband's death, but none of the offers suited her exactly. She wanted youth, good looks, position, and money. Men possess-

ing these four characteristics are apt to be rare. John Edgar possessed them all. Besides, Mrs. Barnard was quick and intuitively correct in her judgments of men, and she was aware that Edgar, though she had known him so short a time, was an upright, honest man; that no matter what the provocation, he would never be cruel to a woman. This was what she thought of him—what she felt for him was to her quite unimportant. She liked him; that was enough. Her passions had lain undisturbed for years, like the bosom of an ocean in a calm. Never a ripple had ruffled their surface until she met Overman; his lazy strength, picturesque appearance, and impetuous way appealed to her and attracted her. She was certainly not in love with him, but had he been rich, doubtless, so far as it lay within her power, she would

have cared for him. However, as she lay back on her pillows, glancing with keen delight down the length of her shapely figure, she thought to herself:

"Ah, my dear Arthur, I'm afraid, notwithstanding your curly hair, your big eyes, your strong muscles, and your other manifold attractions, you must be relegated to the shelf—at least for a time. You see, you are guilty of the crime of poverty, and must be punished. We shall have a pleasant little scene when he learns I propose to marry Edgar. He will be in a towering passion. What fools these men be. They never know what is best for them. My marriage may be his opportunity."

The following morning Edgar waited in until Mrs. Worcester made her appearance. Her toilet naturally took some time, there were so many

little things to do that would have made an unsophisticated "Maud Müller" open her eyes with astonishment.

"Ah, my dear Edgar"—she always called men that she liked by their last name—"why are you idling away your time with newspapers that only give one the horrors, with their murders, suicides, divorces, and general sensationalism? I used to read two or three a day, but I had to give them up. Positively, my otherwise pure mind was becoming saturated with improprieties, and I should have soon become a victim to suggested crime."

"Well, Mrs. Worcester, I wanted to see you alone before I went. That's my only reason," said Edgar quickly.

"Went! Went where?"

"Home—back to New York," he replied.

Mrs. Worcester gave a prolonged "oh!" and sat down on a chair, with her back to the window and the light full on Edgar's face.

"I see, I see." Then after a moment she added:

"You're right, my dear man; you're right. You are going to do something that your sex hates—that is, to not follow your inclinations, but be guided by common sense. But pardon me if I say you are, I think, doing wisely. You know, dear boy, between two intelligent people it is never necessary for them to say all they think; the other is sure to understand without words. Of course this is not easy, what you are about to do, and it will be even harder than you think. The equanimity and fortitude with which most people can bear the troubles that come to others is truly marvelous; so I don't say I

shall lose my appetite over your misfortunes, but I do say I am truly sorry that you have any trouble in store or any wish that must forever remain ungratified. I like you, Edgar; you are the all-round healthiest man I know. Your presence alone would purify a vitiated atmosphere. But," with a sigh and a smile she added, looking up at him, "I don't suppose because one is healthy one is bound to be happy. So don't say another word, but come to me later in the season, when I shall hope to give you a pleasant time with pleasant people who will prove less exciting and less dangerous."

Edgar was delighted to have no further talk about the matter. He would have been still more pleased to have been able to keep his secret to himself. Mrs. Worcester's frank businesslike way of treating the whole

affair grated upon him. As Mrs. Worcester moved toward the door she stopped, and, turning, asked with an upward glance to the floor above:

"Does she know yet?"

"Not yet," echoed Edgar.

"Hum!" said the old lady with a slight chuckle. "It may interfere with her plans." And with this, to her listener, senseless remark, she disappeared. But back she came in a moment.

"Are you going by train or boat?"

"Train, this afternoon."

"Well, tell the butler; he will see to your boxes, and when you get to New York, remember to invest in a man. I'll see you again before you go."

After giving instructions to the butler Edgar started on a long walk over the ocean drive. He was conscious of a great sense of loneliness. To be happy is to share one's happi-

ness; to be in trouble is to be alone. He was learning this truth for the first time. He could not understand the fearful sense of desolation and depression he labored under; he felt as if he were separating from something that had always been a part of his life.

"I've turned no corner," he mused; "I've fallen over a precipice. Can I climb back? Alas, can I climb back?" But as he walked farther and farther away from the woman he was thinking of, his love for her became purer and purer, until he began to wonder why he struggled at all. "Is she not all that other women are, and infinitely more. Has she not taught me to love—a lesson no other woman has been able to teach me? I know nothing against her; every one likes her; she is received everywhere. Would not any man be proud to see

her at the head of his table? Besides, I—I need her to complete my life. It has been till now such a chilly life—like a room during a long winter without a fire."

Here Edgar turned and, resting, looked out over the sea — the sea that has a tune that fits every mood. Are you glad? and the waves laugh with you; are you sad? and their cold, monotonous swish seems in keeping with the troubles that beat upon your breast. But if the form of the woman you love is before your eyes, watch some rising tide make love to a single rock, and take a lesson in caressing. How the waves in gentle curves sweep up her sides, each time higher, that they may reach her lips, until at last they bury her from sight in their jealous love! So Edgar thought and felt, and, rising, had almost determined to remain and ask

the woman he loved to marry him. He knew from the last look she had given him that her answer, in time, would be Yes.

But as Edgar walked home and drew nearer and nearer to the one who occupied his thoughts, his love seemed less lovely; its purity as he approached her grew less, until once more he stood beneath her windows, when with a violent motion of his arm he seemed to fling it from him as unworthy, and strode through the door feeling like one who has parted with a vice that one had loved.

That afternoon he sent up word to her that if possible he would like to see her for a moment. She sent back a message that at three o'clock she was going to move into Mrs. Worcester's sitting room, and would be delighted to see him. So at three he made his appearance, feeling very

nervous and depressed. There she was, the woman who had wrought this great change in him—at that moment he could not have analyzed his feelings; they were too complex for one unaccustomed to introspection.

"Mr. Edgar, I consider this kindly, considerate, and altogether friendly; come over here and sit down where I can see you." (Edgar hesitated.) "Don't be frightened—I'm not an ogress, only a lonely woman who is delighted to have the one person she most wanted to see, come to cheer her."

One of Mrs. Barnard's most dangerous moods to the peace of men was when she became womanly and her eyes claimed a right to sympathy. A man suddenly became aware that he was a great, big, hulking brute, and that she was something tender and

fragile that timidly asked his protection.

Edgar at that moment would have given anything to have her tell him some one had been rude to her, so that he could have gone and fought whole regiments of men, if necessary, for her sake. He drew his chair closer to her sofa and asked her about her foot. She was watching him narrowly. Ignoring his questions, she said:

"You don't look well; you are pale and seem worried; what is the matter?"

He hesitated again—and she continued:

"Mr. Edgar, we have not known each other long, but to natures that are sympathetic time has little to do with intimacy. Am I wrong or bold in saying that I think we two have learned to know and like one an-

other already? If this is true, can you not tell me what is on your mind, and let me serve you if I can? Should I fail"—here she looked down and her voice was not so steady—"you need never give me another chance; I shall know I have made another mistake. Alas! I've made so many!"

Edgar raised his eyes; they had the helpless, dumb look of pathos seen in the eyes of some dogs.

"I am in no trouble, Mrs. Barnard; at least in none where you could aid me. I only came up a moment to say good-by."

It was a hard little look that crossed Mrs. Barnard's face.

"Good-by," she said; "and where are you going?"

"Back to New York," he answered.

She was thoroughly astonished. Her plans, as Mrs. Worcester had said, were indeed upset. "He's a

fool!" she muttered to herself; "does he want me to fall on his neck and propose to *him?*" She determined, however, to give him another chance.

"Why do you go, Mr. Edgar? Please tell me. Perhaps if you do, though you do not suspect it, I might aid you; please tell me."

Edgar felt that if this went on much longer his part of St. Anthony would have to be taken by somebody else; he could not stand it.

"Indeed, Mrs. Barnard, I have nothing to tell"—but here he wavered. "I have something to ask."

Edgar would have been rendered speechless if he had known the commotion this statement made in the woman's breast. Down went her head, and her fingers interlaced themselves upon her lap.

"Ask me anything," she whispered.

"I want—I want—"

Mrs. Barnard thought he never would say what he wanted, he stammered so—"I want you to give me one of your photographs. I am not likely to forget you, but it would make me very happy if you thought me worthy of one."

Mrs. Barnard made the effort of her life in controlling herself. She did not know whether she was more angry with him than with herself. She had permitted him to surprise her into being a fool before herself. It was well she was looking in her lap, for, had he received the look she gave her hands, it would have annihilated him. In a second she was herself again, and answered:

"Why, of course, Mr. Edgar; nowadays to give a photograph means nothing; I will give you one with pleasure. I have not one here, but give me your address and I will send it."

Her manner now was positively cheery, and his correspondingly depressed.

"You must come and see me in New York. I go from here to Beverly, and from there to Lenox. But we are sure to meet again some time, ours is such a little world, after all. And now you must not think me rude, but the doctor will be here in a minute to see my poor old foot, and I must get back to my own room. It was very sweet of you to come and see me, and I appreciate it."

Here she stretched out her firm, white hand.

Edgar rose and took it. His brain was in a whirl. It was so sudden; he had not meant to go yet; he had more to say. Again she watched him closely; her eyes fairly glistened as she tried to discover a sign of weakness.

But no; with some apparent effort he said the words—

"Good-by," and was gone.

Mrs. Barnard looked for some time at the door through which he had disappeared. She had indeed been surprised; she had totally mistaken the man, she told herself, and for the first time her feeling for him took on a personal coloring. All she said, however, was, "He needs another lesson, and he shall have it."

Edgar reached New York that night.

PART II.

EDGAR had not been back in the city two days before Mrs. Barnard's photograph arrived, but with no note. He had hardly admitted it to himself, but he had so hoped she would send him a few words that, no matter how formal, he might forever treasure! Again the distance he was from her purified his love, and great waves of sentiment swept over him as he worked; and how he worked, all day and late into the night! He never permitted his brains to be idle for a moment. He prepared all his cases for the next term of the courts. He even wrote a little pamphlet on railroad law, looking up his authorities in

the evening at the Bar Association. Truxton came to see him a number of times, but could not induce him to take any rest. These were sad days for poor Edgar: he was always alone, his life was a Sahara of silence; he wondered how a man could think of two things utterly dissimilar and do either justice; but he found that, though she was never out of his mind, his work was all logical and clever. What if her features came between him and his book, and he saw the printed page through a transparency of her face? He was glad to have it so; it made him less lonely during this time, when life was nothing but a checkerboard of days and nights. What he wanted was sympathy, but his trouble was one he could speak of to nobody. Never in his life before had he had the slightest inclination, when worried, to lighten his cares by

sharing them with another. He had always said that "such a course was the height of selfishness. If you have a joy," he used to say, "you double it by sharing it with another; but if you have a grief, to confide it to a friend is to help yourself at the expense of a fellow-sufferer."

To be philosophical is to take things that are sad gracefully, but to be constantly philosophical is to admit that life is forever sad; and as time wore on, the strain on Edgar became greater. His very action of having put aside the temptation of his own free will debarred him from sympathy, and as his reasons for resisting the temptation concerned a woman, he could not speak of them. He had thought for a moment of going West to see his family. He wanted to feel in his loneliness that he belonged to somebody, and somebody belonged

to him; but when the idea of his expecting tenderness from his "unco guid" at home struck him forcibly, he laughed at his folly and his weakness—as likely extract the milk of human kindness from a cactus plant.

This had been going on for some four or five weeks, when one day Truxton walked into his club and found little Isaac Benjamin Holmes seated in a corner by himself. This little chap had always been a great favorite with both Truxton and Edgar. Notwithstanding his Hebraic name, he apparently had no trace of Jewish blood in him; in fact he was not a Jew. He was small, but with a sturdy frame, blue eyes, and light curly hair. He looked like a miniature Norseman. He was always jolly and companionable, and a sure cure for the "blues." When chaffed about his name, he would laugh and say: "My dear boys,

there is nothing funny about me; I'm a very interesting character—very—I am a sort of a changeling, or rather my name is a changeling; I am perfectly sure the day I made my first bow to the public a little Hebrew of highly respected parents also made his *début*. I believe we were christened the same day, same hour, and that by some curious disturbance of brain waves he got my name of 'Charles Henry,' and I his of 'Isaac Benjamin'; but do you know I never feel sorry for him, for I am confident his friends never chaff him about something he could not help?" This generally led to a sudden change of subject. As Truxton entered, Ike looked up and called:

"Come over here, Trux. I want to ask you something. Will you tell me, in the name of all that's blue in the heavens and green on earth, what is

the matter with Edgar? I saw him for the first time in an age yesterday, and he looked like his astral body out for a stroll. Is he studying to be a Mahatma, or is he wasting away? That's an awfully sad thing, to waste away; you know my little fortune that my uncle left me did that, and I have never ceased to weep bitter tears to think I helped it waste."

"I can't imagine," replied Truxton. "I believe he is in love."

"Now, by the nine gods, this is too much! Thou dost much mistake me, Trux, if thou thinkest I have lost my wits as well as my fortune. Edgar in love! Yes, with some high ideal of duty; some plan to regenerate the whole world; or with some other even grander scheme—such, for instance, as to make me steady and sensible; but in love with a woman, a mere woman, here to-day, gone to-

morrow! Nay, nay! I do protest—thou dost mistake me; I'll have none of it!"

"Then how do you account for it?"

"Don't ask me anything about accounts just at present, it's a very delicate subject; besides, it always was a detestable word. I can't explain it, but I do know that it behooves us as his friends to serve him with a summons to come and dine with us this very night. He shall lock his troubles up in his jewel case before he comes. He shall look upon the wine when it is red. He shall realize that trouble is a relative term, and that there are men who will swap troubles with him, taking his, and give him a million to boot. No man has a right to think twice of himself until he has lost his health."

"Good! I'm with you. Let us compel him to shake hands with

himself once more," exclaimed Truxton.

Ike moved over to the desk and wrote:

"Oh, genial, jolly Johnnyhaha (I can not call you Minnehaha, for you are not a lady), will you not come with your silvery laugh and dine with me and Trux to-night here at seven-thirty? We are dull and sad; and noticing your wild hilarity of late, we want you to come and cheer us up. The bubbling effervescence of your gayety tempts us. Come with your harp, come with your lute; but whatever you do, 'come.' Yours,

"TRUX and IKE."

"There," he said, turning to Truxton, "I think that is rather neat, particularly 'bubbling effervescence of your gayety.' Putting good words

together instead of good deeds is my forte. I should have written a book, Trux (this confidentially), but I never did. I *made* one instead; and, Trux, when I think of that book, where nothing stood to win and everything to lose, including myself, I am convinced I am not a born author."

"Here,' he said, handing the note to Truxton, "send this by an '*escargot*'—it is sure to fetch him."

"An *escargot*—what's that?"

"A messenger boy—French for 'snail,' don't you know?" he explained.

When Edgar received this effusion he threw it on his desk and said: "Dear little Ike—I've half a mind to go. I've tried work as a cure, and it does not seem to have brought about brilliant results. Why not try diversion? When somebody described love to be the reduction of the uni-

verse to a single being, he presupposed a mutual possession of the one lover by the other. Now, I am alone with my love, but not with the object of it. I think love is a disease which, if left alone, will cure itself, but if noticed and pampered proves chronic. I will try ignoring it."

So he went.

Now, little Ike probably knew more about ordering a good dinner than half the men in town. His knowledge of wines was the pride of his life. He used to say:

"Everything in this world costs money. Now, of course, I know more about wines than other men, for I paid more to know. By a complex mathematical calculation I found it took about one third of Nunky's legacy to make me the infallible judge I am, and I am proud I spent the money so wisely."

So the food and the wines would have tempted the appetite of a man in love, or one who had just finished dinner—which is saying a great deal.

He had secured a table in the corner where their conversation was less likely to be overheard. When Edgar entered the room, little Ike took a long look at him, and was more astonished than ever at his appearance.

"He looks like a man who had survived cremation," thought Ike; "or one who had inhaled flame, and inwardly was nothing but a cinder. His eyes look like tiny volcanic craters—round, dark, and fathomless. If he ever cries," said the little man to himself, "I'll bet his tears are lava." The small man's heart was as tender as a girl's before hardened by trouble. His face was all smiles, whatever his thoughts may have been.

"Hello! we've got you at last," he

cried; "literally snaked you out. Come here and have a cocktail, one of my own invention; they call them 'little Ikes'—there's fame for you. The men no longer speak of one another as having 'little jags'; they call them 'little Ikes.' My! but I'm proud. Now, Trux, none of your Miss Nancy airs; you're going to have a cocktail, or lose a friend.—Here, waiter, bring three 'little Ikes.' Great Cæsar! that sounds like a demand for triplets—picture me such a father.—Here, waiter, bring three, but bring them one at a time, that won't make me so nervous."

So he rattled on, and by his thoughtfulness obviated the embarrassment they would have felt at their first meeting. Two or three times during dinner the conversation approached dangerous ground; but, principally owing to Ike's tact, it was brought

safely back to firm footing. Both of Edgar's friends knew that he was a man whose confidence might be given but could not be taken. If he meant to share his trouble, against his rules, it would be when he thought best and not before. Edgar drank more freely at dinner than he ever had. He astonished his friends with his brilliant talk. From one topic to another he jumped with surprising mental agility, as if he feared a moment's silence would be his heart's undoing.

Toward the end of dinner Edgar said, turning to Ike: "Look here, you're a man of a million friends; I want you to look around and get me a steam yacht. I want to charter—"

"I am not only a man with a million friends, but I have friends who have millions. I needed both friends and millions, and as I could not get both, I take the ones who have the others.

You probably could not have found a man more especially fitted by Providence to find a yacht for you, and, if you will pardon the suggestion, one more desirable to take with you on a cruise as 'guide, philosopher, and friend.'"

"Why, Edgar!" exclaimed Truxton, "what on earth are you going to do with a yacht?"

"Nothing on earth," laughed the other, "but I hope to cruise on the water for the remainder of the season. As Lasca said, 'I want free life and I want fresh air,' and though I do not 'sigh for a canter after the cattle,' I do sigh for a change of scene." His lips trembled as he spoke.

"Well," interrupted little Ike, "don't worry. I will say 'Presto!' and wave my magic forefinger, and a steam yacht, puffing with pride, will await your pleasure at the foot of Twenty-sixth Street."

After dinner they moved into the smoking-room and had their coffee and brandy. When they were seated, Ike turned and called the attention of the others to a cluster of men at another table, who were laughing and joking quite merrily.

"Now, they look happy, don't they?" he asked.

"They are happy," Edgar replied, a little sadly.

"Well, let me tell you something. I am the club confidant. A man goes out and contracts a trouble, just as he might contract a disease. He does not go to his regular physician, but he comes to me, his mental doctor. The first relief he gets is by telling me all about it; that does him a world of good and me no harm, and takes away from him that sense of loneliness that a man has when he goes about with his sin or his sorrow all to himself. Then I pre-

scribe, each according to his case, and he goes away feeling infinitely less depressed. When you are in trouble don't tell every one, but confide in some trustworthy friend. My boys! you mark my words, it is the secretive man who commits suicide when the strain gets too great for *one* to bear. Now I happen to know—I'll, of course, mention no names—that among those men one has an indebtedness to meet, a loss he made at cards, which is way beyond his power to settle. He owes it to a man already so rich that the money could make no difference either way; but there is no fault so grievous in the eyes of the rich, on the part of the poor, as any uncertainty in money matters. I make no excuse for him; there were many extenuating circumstances, but they make no difference to any one but himself and to the friend in whom he has confided. He

has to look the bare fact in the face. There is another man in that party that I happen to know was refused yesterday by a woman he has worked ten years to earn the right to ask in marriage. He has been plucky and patient so long that perhaps he may continue so from force of habit; he will need both qualities for many a day. There is another whose doctor told him he must stop drinking or die. He has chosen drink. He says 'life to him is not worth the effort.' Each man is unconscious of the other's trouble, and conscious only of his own cross, but each one is the better for having told me. I tell you, boys, though you may not believe it, it is when you are in trouble that you're in a crowd, it is when you are happy that you are alone."

During this long monologue Edgar sat looking at Ike with a drawn face;

as he finished he caught his eye, and though no word was spoken, little Ike knew his lesson had been taken to heart.

"Look here, man," Truxton began, "if you keep on in this strain I shall go upstairs and have a good cry. Aren't we going to the theater?"

"We are—we are," replied Ike, with every particle of solemnity gone from his face. "We have to go now and sit in judgment upon the perfect voice and perfect limbs of Mademoiselle Katrina Van Arden. Come; but let us be merciful as well as just."

During the play Ike cast many furtive glances at Edgar, and thought that, though he seemed temporarily distracted under protest, it was doing him good. On their way home Truxton left them, but the other two walked on to Edgar's rooms. When

they reached them he said to the other:

"Come up. I want to talk with you a moment."

Ike was delighted, for he was sure his friend meant to tell him what was on his mind.

Edgar seated himself before a big desk, hesitated a moment, and said:

"What was the amount of that young chap's gambling indebtedness you spoke of to-night?"

Ike's face was a study in surprise. At length he answered, "I don't think I should tell you."

"Better!" said Edgar laconically.

"Twenty-five hundred dollars."

Edgar wrote in a book for a moment, then rising, he said:

"Now you will oblige me by keeping your opinions to yourself. Here's a check for twenty-five hundred dollars. I want you to tell your friend

that you know some one that will lend him this money on his note. Get his note at twelve months to your order, and give him the money in cash. Tell him that if at the end of the year he can't pay, not to worry, as your party will renew. Tell him to ask no questions, but slap the money into the hands of his creditor as if it were a trifle. Now, good-night, and many thanks, and God bless you for the best little fellow in the world."

"Please may I speak?" said Ike with mock humility.

"Only a word, then."

"Well, you must admit it did that fellow some good to confide in me."

"Yes," answered the other softly, "but the others were beyond help. Good-night," and Ike went slowly down the stairs.

For two weeks more Edgar kept

himself constantly on the go. There was nothing within reason he did not try, to bring forgetfulness. He looked up a number of his old-men friends, but they seemed to him so hopelessly dull and far away. Their words pattered as harmlessly on the house in which his brain lived as rain patters on a roof, and the sound was like their conversation—nothing but a dull, monotonous noise.

He was like a man dying of thirst; his whole being was parched and dry. He had not heard a word of Mrs. Barnard since he left Newport, nor would he make inquiries. Occasionally he saw her name in the papers as being present at some festivity, and that was all—only that, strange as it may seem, he kept those newspapers in a secret drawer of his desk. Had he read all the names, he would have noticed that Overman was always

somewhere in the list. One morning Truxton called on him. They were to lunch together. Just before they started Truxton said:

"Look here, old man, may I go into your bedroom and wash my hands?"

Without thinking, Edgar answered "Yes."

As Truxton entered the room he perceived on the bureau the photograph of the handsomest woman in the handsomest frame he had ever seen. With a prolonged whistle of astonishment, he took it to the window and held it to the light.

"Oh! but she's a beauty," he exclaimed.

Edgar in the other room rose from his chair, white with passion; he knew what had happened.

A moment's silence, then Truxton added in a pensive tone, "You must be awfully fond of her."

"Why?" asked Edgar, as he clutched his chair to steady himself.

"Because you kiss her every night. I can see the marks of your lips upon the glass."

Edgar took a quick step forward, and then, controlling himself, walked into the bedroom where Truxton was; taking the photograph gently from his hands, he said: "You are right; it is the face of the woman I love."

His companion looked as a man might who had accidentally shot his friend. Stretching out his hand, he cried: "Forgive me, Edgar. I never thought—"

"Not another word," the other answered, taking his proffered hand. "It is hard for me to say it, but I am glad you know. Come, we will be late for lunch." And he was glad. Truxton had not seen him so much like himself in weeks.

The following morning little Ike came to his rooms early and caught him before he had started down town. The moment Edgar saw him he knew, by the triumphant look of the man, that he had something unusual to say.

Bowing low in the doorway, Ike said in an inquiring way :

"Mr. Edgar, I believe?"

"That is my name, sir."

"Well, Mr. Edgar, I have a little surprise for you. I have waved my magic forefinger. I have said, 'Presto!' and a steam yacht, puffing with pride, awaits you at the foot of Twenty-sixth Street. Captain and crew engaged and on board the yacht, all stocked with provisions and wines. You can start to-morrow. Did I hear you say anything about 'Well done, good and faithful servant'?"

"You did—you did, my boy; you're a trump, and I now appoint you my

'guide, philosopher, and friend' during the coming cruise, of which we will immediately proceed to make the itinerary."

For two hours they talked, consulted maps, and planned their coming trip. When Ike left, all was arranged, and they had decided to sail the following day.

All that day Edgar was brighter; once or twice he caught himself whistling, and smiled grimly and wondered whether he was recovering, or whether it was the anticipation of a change, the novelty of which would soon wear off, leaving him worse off than ever. About four o'clock he returned to his rooms. His servant met him and handed him a note. Edgar glanced at it with indifference; and then, as he noted that the address was in a woman's handwriting unknown to him, he tremblingly dropped into his big arm-

chair. "Is it from her?" he muttered; "no—no, she would not write to me. What is there to say?" Here he tore off the envelope with nervous hands and read:

"DEAR MR. EDGAR: I am passing through town on my way to Lenox; I shall be here only one night. Won't you come up this evening and have a chat? I know you like frank people, so I am frank with you. I want to see you; come and take pity on my loneliness. Yours sincerely,

"ROSALIE BARNARD."

Edgar crumpled the note in his hand and began pacing the floor. He was very pale, but his heart was thumping like a steam drill.

"Shall I go? Nonsense! You've mastered yourself at the expense of every spark of vitality you possessed;

why put yourself in the way of temptation again, and have to make another fight?"

Here he seized his pen and wrote:

"DEAR MRS. BARNARD: I am sorry that a previous engagement prevents—"

"Bah!" he muttered, looking up, "that's too formal; the woman has not insulted me, she has paid me a compliment; there is no necessity to act like a brute," and tearing up that sheet of paper he began again:

"DEAR MRS. BARNARD: I am most unfortunate, but it so happens I have an unbreakable engagement for the evening. I hope, however—"

Now he stopped once more, and, rising, walked the floor. Her face

and form rose up before him, her eyes said Come, her lips said Come, and her arms said Come.

"My God!" he cried, "I must see her once more. I am off on the yacht to-morrow. It can do me no harm. I won't stay long, but see her again I must."

Then he wrote:

"DEAR MRS. BARNARD: I will be with you at nine this evening.

"Yours sincerely,

"JOHN EDGAR."

The moment it was done he felt quieter. He seemed to realize that Fate had taken him in hand, and struggling was useless.

Then he became madly exultant.

"I'll see her again!" he almost shouted, "I'll touch her hand, I'll kiss the very air she breathes, I'll hear her

voice—the only one that can make a hell a heaven to me! I love her better than all that's pure, all that's true, all that's best. *I love her*—damn you all and every one!"

After this paroxysm Edgar buried his face in his hands and his big frame shook with tearless sobs. It showed the pent-up misery this poor man had kept locked up in the heart of his heart for so long. After the storm came the inevitable calm, and he sat quietly thinking; but there was a light in his eyes that was strange to them—the same light that comes to the eyes of those who have been long in danger but see help coming at last.

When Mrs. Barnard read his note she smiled. She noticed that the writing was almost illegible, the hand that had guided the pen was not under control. She guessed very shrewdly how he had looked when it was writ-

ten. She had heard indirectly from several friends how he was changed in health, in looks, in everything, and she had timed her return accordingly. In regard to the yachting trip she was ignorant, and here she had builded better than she knew. The devil is a thoughtful person. She had had to use considerable diplomacy and *finesse* to prevent Overman coming to town at the same time. Lately he had become more importunate than ever; at times he tired her; but there was a sinister attraction in this man for her, and she kept him waiting against hope. She knew herself and her world too well not to prefer being Edgar's wife than a surreptitious mistress to Overman.

It was one of those warm evenings toward the end of September that Edgar walked slowly up to Mrs. Barnard's. Each boarding house was un-

mistakable with its contingent of boarders airing themselves on the stoop. The clerk in some down-town house was having his little flirtation with the young woman who gave music lessons. The policeman looked warm and weary, but not too tired to receive with unctuous complacency the admiration of some of his old lady friends. Of the fashionable people, of course, none had returned to town, and so in some places it looked like a city of the dead. Edgar had taken off his light overcoat and thrown it over his arm, and, though he exposed a broad expanse of white shirt, no one noticed him, as they would have in New York some years before. He was quite calm now; the agitation of the afternoon had left him a little weak and shaky physically, but mentally he was steady and firm.

Mrs. Barnard's house was a tiny

box just off the avenue. There are very few of them in the best part of the city, but, with her remarkable capacity for always getting what she wanted, she had managed to secure this one some years before, notwithstanding three young married couples had applied before her to the real-estate agent. She paid him a visit personally, and after a few minutes' conversation, during which she never took her eyes off of him, he said:

"I am tired of always having business before pleasure, and as it will be a pleasure for me to gratify you, though unbusinesslike in this case, please consider the house yours."

A look of such ineffable gratitude swept over her face that he felt a thousand times repaid; and only once or twice during the day did he realize that his self-respect felt a little sore and bruised.

The little front drawing room was crammed with tiny rugs, small tables covered with wee bits of silver, and in every corner stood an *étagère*, crowded with rare pieces of china and porcelain. The very walls were decorated and festooned with silks and tapestries. The room was so crowded that no clumsy man could walk with safety. These were all the remnants of her former glory in the large establishment she had first occupied with Mr. Barnard. A soft light pervaded the room, made by two well-shaded lamps.

When Edgar entered she was standing draped in something white, something soft, something clinging, the arrangement of which made its very modesty seem suggestive.

She had heard that he was not looking well, but she was utterly unprepared to see him look so ill. It

was not pity for him she felt, but pride in her own power.

"It was more than good of you to come, Mr. Edgar. I hope I am a better companion for others than I am for myself, but when I am alone I get so sad and depressed that it is really pitiful."

The moment Edgar saw her and heard her voice he knew he was a slave again; but he meant to fight for his freedom.

"It was you," he answered, "who was guilty of thoughtfulness and consideration. I say 'guilty,' because they must be crimes, they are so rare. I had almost given up the hope of seeing you again, when your note came like a slant of light into a darkened room."

They were seated together on a divan, with a Himalaya-like range of cushions at their back.

"Have you been in town ever since you left Newport?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What doing?"

"Working and playing."

"Which do you prefer?"

"I seem to hate them both," he murmured, not looking at her. He feared to trust his eyes.

"I am afraid," she said slowly, "there's a woman in the case." Mrs. Barnard's management of her voice at all times was something marvelously beautiful in the way it interpreted her words.

"It seems hard on our poor sex, but wherever there is trouble there is always a woman. But did you never think, Mr. Edgar, that where a woman is the cause of trouble she is oftentimes its only remedy? Is this your case?"

Edgar trembled; he felt as if he

were looking down a sheer precipice of a thousand feet, with rocks below. He edged away a little, keeping his eyes well covered.

"No," he lied, "my case is not so interesting; I am only a little bored with work as well as play; but don't let us talk about myself; as a topic of conversation I am a failure."

"I know of nothing I should care to hear about so much."

"But when I say to you that, I am that I am, the story is told; surely this is not exciting."

For the first time in her life Mrs. Barnard doubted her capacity to do with men as she chose. "What is the matter with the man?" she thought. "Has he too little feeling or too much control? He loves me—of course he loves me; but his soul won't sanction the action of his heart. But his soul, forsooth, must learn to obey."

"I am not one," she said, "who is forever descanting on the selfishness of men, and somehow I have never associated selfishness with you; you are in all respects unlike the others. But to-night your unwillingness to please me by telling me something about your inward self, when you can see I care to know, is either selfish or an intimation that you prefer acquaintanceship to friendship. You see, Mr. Edgar, my life has not been a very successful one since—since—my husband died. I have been very much alone. Of course, I have had admirers among men, but friends—no. When I met you, I saw at a glance how different you were from all I had ever known; how an atmosphere of sincerity and honesty pervaded you; how your cleverness was without cynicism, and how your attitude toward women was one of tender defer-

ence; and I said to myself, 'That man shall be my friend.' I have failed, Mr. Edgar, but that is nothing new for me; it is simply another bead to add to the necklace of failures I have made for myself. This is a good deal for a woman to say, is it not? Perhaps too much. Probably your ideal woman would not have been so honest. But, come, enough of this. May I sing to you a new song I've learned?"

During this speech Mrs. Barnard had been slightly facing him, with either arm outstretched, resting on the cushions back of her. As she talked she leaned farther and farther forward, her fingers opening and closing ever more rapidly on the velvety softness of the pillows. As she finished she rose and stood over him.

"May I?" she repeated.

Edgar could not trust himself to

speak, but bowed his head in acquiescence. The piano was in the other room diagonally opposite to where he sat. Once again the waves of her pure voice shook the very foundations of Edgar's whole being, and his senses swam in a sea of sweet sounds. He looked up and gazed at her; she never turned, and he feasted his eyes like a glutton. As she finished he rose and stood by the fireplace, resting his arm on the mantel. She came toward him and said:

"Do you like it? Don't you think it's pretty?" But before he could answer she drew nearer to him, saying:

"Are you ill? You look so pale."

"Yes," he whispered, "I have a headache."

Slowly she raised her white arm and put the cool palm of her hand to his forehead. That slight touch of flesh to flesh pulled down about

him all the walls of his resolutions. Throwing his arms wildly around her, he kissed her passionately.

"Marry me, will you not? For God's sake, say Yes!"

There was a moment's silence. Then Rosalie raised her face to his and said with infinite piquancy, "Since you have kissed me, I suppose I must."

Edgar stayed till twelve. His happiness was almost childish. He made her stand before him in every graceful pose. "Here, rest your arm there; place your hand here," he would insist; then he would gaze his fill, and cry with outstretched arms:

"And it's mine—all mine; please tell me so again." He had forgotten everything; all doubts, all fears were gone; his soul was hidden behind his heart in shame; he was drunk with the velocity of his unreined passions.

Even Mrs. Barnard felt the contagion slightly, and humored his every whim. After he had gone, she sat and thought by an open window for a long time. "Have I done wisely?" she wondered for a moment. "Of course I have; only fools doubt the wisdom of what is done and past recalling.

"Dear me," she laughed, as she remembered a line in Story's Cleopatra, "'His love, like his rage, was rude.' I had no idea he had it in him. He has more force in every way than I dreamed. I very much fear he will not prove clay in the potter's hands. Well—however, I've got a rich husband that won't lose his money, who has a good social position, who is young and fair-looking, and who won't disgrace *me*, whatever I may do *to him*. This will be such a bright and cheery bit of news for Arthur Over-

man that I quite relish telling him. Poor Arthur, if he had only been rich, some things might have been different. I do wish my newly acquired John wasn't so painfully good. He really oppresses me, though between us we'll strike a fair average."

Here Mrs. Barnard went to her bedroom and slept the sleep of the conscienceless.

They had arranged already about their marriage; they were to wait only a month, and then have a quiet wedding. Mrs. Barnard was to go the following day to Lenox, where Edgar was to follow her in three or four days. He, lover-like, wanted to come immediately, but Mrs. Barnard meant to have time to dispose of Overman, so she made him promise not to come sooner.

The next morning Edgar rose from the first night of heavy, dreamless

sleep he had enjoyed in a long time. As all that had occurred the night previous passed before his waking brain, and he realized what had happened, he could hardly believe it. Although there was a great deal of purple in John Edgar's love for this woman, there was also plenty of white. It would have been impossible for him to have loved otherwise, and it was plain to see that, now she was to be his, he meant to believe in her in every way. He had not finished dressing when little Ike was announced. Edgar was standing before a mirror with a brush in each hand vigorously brushing his hair.

"Hello! my fine buck," he cried, "*Wie gehts?—Comment ça va?* Good-morning. How is the captain of the Pinafore, you sad sea dog?" Then he sang:

"The wind is sou-sou-E,
And the wind is piping free,
And the wind is blowing and the ship is going,
And we are off to sea, to sea!"

"Don't stand there grinning like a Cheshire cat. Come in."

Little Ike stood in the doorway, and speaking aloud, but apparently to himself, said:

"It's sad to see such an intellect so shattered; so young too. I wonder where his keeper is? I hope he's not dangerous."

"Here, none of your impertinence," cried Edgar.

"Impertinence; do you wonder that I am astonished? Yesterday, in this very room, I left a gentleman of my acquaintance, sensible and serious—in fact, a little depressing at times; and the next day I find the same man, without apparent cause, a gibbering idiot. If the contempla-

tion of a cruise has this effect upon you, what in the name of canvas-back ducks will the cruise do to you?"

"Look here, my bonny boy, yesterday you had a little surprise for me, you remember; now to-day I have one for you. I am not going on that cruise."

"What!" exploded Ike, as he bounded into the air like a mortally wounded stag. "Not going? Nonsense! you've got to go. Everything is ready, I'm all packed—I—"

"But I did not say *you* were not going," interrupted Edgar.

"Oh, come now, you are daft! How in the name of a cold bottle can I go without you?"

"Listen a minute. The yacht must be paid for any way; the crew also; the provisions on board also. I can save no money by letting her lie in

the East River for six weeks, and I want you to take her, ask a friend, and go for the cruise we planned together. I ask it as a favor; I can not go myself."

"But, for goodness' sake, why not?"

"I am engaged."

"Well, you may be, but you don't seem very busy."

"Engaged to be married. Who's the idiot now, Stupid?"

Ike looked at him steadily, and saw that he meant what he said. When his brain had absorbed the fact his arms dropped to his sides and he slowly said:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

"Doubtless you will," laughed Edgar. Then, stretching out his hand, with a suspicion of moisture in each eye, he asked:

"And won't you wish me joy, Ike?"

Then two hands came together with a bang that suggested the report of a pistol.

"Wish you joy? Why I should say so! God bless you, old man! If you're half as happy as you deserve to be you'll do well enough—but let me see her. Haven't you a photograph?"

Then he showed him the one he had, and the two friends had a long talk, in which Edgar led him to suppose that his previous unhappiness was owing to his inability to earn the consent of the lady in question. He also persuaded him to use the yacht, as offered.

As little Ike walked down town he muttered to himself:

"My boy, your brain is a plum pudding—without any plums in the way of ideas, of course. He was in love all the time and you could not see it! You might have known that nothing

can hit so hard as a woman! If he had lost every cent he owned in the world he would not have looked as he did. If such agony as he suffered is a preliminary to marriage, little Ike does not marry. He will continue to bump through this muddy world by himself."

Edgar wrote to Mrs. Worcester announcing his engagement. So did Rosalie. She answered Edgar in this wise:

"MY DEAR MR. EDGAR: My good wishes, of course, you have. It was a surprise to me, I admit. I thought you had decided to take Punch's advice to those about to marry. It is impossible for one person to say what will or will not make another happy. I doubted at one time whether Mrs. Barnard would make you happy; but now you have chosen her, I doubt no

longer. I hope the rest of your life may be as satisfactory to yourself as I know your life up to this point must have been. A Quakeress once said to her husband: 'It's a very queer world, and there are very queer people in it, and thou too, Reuben, are a little queer,' and so I say to you.

"Yours cordially,

"SARAH WORCESTER.'

To Mrs. Barnard she wrote:

"I was indeed surprised to hear your good news, for wonderful good news it must be to you, as it would be to any woman to secure such a man. It is useless to tell a woman so clever as yourself what a prize she has drawn. I hope, indeed, you may be marvelously happy, not only, my dear, on your account, but because hereafter all his happiness will be but a reflection of yours."

It is needless to say this letter did not make Mrs. Barnard's heart glow with gratitude.

Arthur Overman came to the city that very day, but the bird had flown to Lenox. He wasted no time, but followed her on. He had become suspicious of her, and though he had almost forgotten Edgar, every man was to him a possible rival. The intimacy between these two had increased, of course, simply by seeing so much of each other, but that Overman was any nearer to the gratification of his wishes can not be said. What these wishes were Overman hardly knew himself. He had always known she would not marry him, but he had hoped in a vague way that she might link her life with his for a time; but even in this scheme he had little confidence. He knew her too well to think she would be deterred by innate good-

ness, but the possibility that her worldly ambitions might be utterly crushed would prove an insurmountable barrier, yet the idea that she might possibly become another's positively drove him frantic. How many men have married not because they were desperately in love with the woman, but because the thought of her marrying another was in its repugnance motive enough, will never be known.

To be happy in married life the matrimonial yoke should be changed to an elastic band—when one pulls a little the other must give, and there must be room for the neck to play. So long as neither takes the ring from around his or her neck there is an even chance for happiness.

Overman arrived late that night, but as soon as conventionality permitted he drove over to where Mrs. Barnard was stopping and sent up

his card. She did not keep him waiting a minute. Her first question was:

"Have you seen anything, heard anything?"

"No," he answered, looking puzzled and a little frightened.

"Then come along with me; the others are all playing tennis. We will go out the other side of the house. I have something to say to you."

Mechanically he followed her. When they had reached a shady place far from the house, the tennis players, and the possibility of observation, and where there was a rustic bench stretched between two trees, she turned and said:

"Now, Arthur Overman, I don't want a scene. I know you love me in your own particular way; you've told me so too often to permit me to forget. I have something to tell you that I have no doubt will make you

miserable for a time, but you have got to hear it—there is no alternative—and if your love for me is worth my having, you will bear it like a man, and so make things easy for me. I am going to marry Mr. Edgar; I have promised him."

As this blow fell on Overman he winced; then, clutching her wrist with a merciless grasp, he hissed: "You fiend! You shall not! Do you hear? You shall not!"

"But I shall," she said sweetly. "And won't you in the meantime release my wrist? It is more susceptible of pain and less strong than a gun-barrel."

Overman let it drop, but said again, with a voice as hoarse as a raven's, "You shall not!"

"Really, if you repeat that once more I shall think it the refrain of some old song you know. And now,

dear fellow, do be reasonable. Why stand there croaking that you propose to prevent an event that it is not within your power to affect in any way? I am going to marry Mr. Edgar, and, though I am very fond of you, I shall simply refuse to see anything of you until you behave. Don't be foolish; there are too many fools in the world already. Besides, there is not a woman on earth that is worth a toothache, much less a heartache."

"In other words," he said, "now that you are done with me I am to take all my hopes, my life, everything I hold dear, and pass them over to another man; and I am to do this without a protest, without a sign of emotion, in order to make, as you say, things easy for you."

Here Mrs. Barnard looked up in his handsome face and said:

"I did not say I was done with you."

For a long time Overman looked into her eyes trying to read her thoughts. He well knew she was a woman who never permitted any plain speaking that might reflect upon her discreditably.

"I have a plan," she continued. "Or, rather, it is not a plan—merely a suggestion. Go abroad for six months, then come back and see me."

"Brilliant! brilliant! Go abroad, then come back and see you! Thanks, thanks, a thousand times, for this opportunity and its reward!"

"My dear Arthur, if you are going to have hysterics again go over there and roll in the grass and thump with your mighty fist the fair bosom of Mother Earth. But I don't propose to have my nerves unstrung watching you. And while you are rolling in the

grass, remember, dear Arthur, you have often heard me say I do not like obtuse men. But this morning—as your intellect seems under a cloud—I will speak more plainly. This marriage shall take place. I do not wish to see you before that day, nor on that day, nor for six months afterward. I shall know much then that I do not know now; perhaps some of it you may then be glad to hear."

"But, Rosalie, how can I? I love you so! Don't send me away! I promise not to worry you, but let me be near you. Were I so far from you I should freeze to death."

Her only words were, "Will you go? Can't you understand it is your only chance?"

"But, Rosalie—"

"Will you go?"

And slowly he faltered, "Yes."

Then she drew his head down to hers and kissed him.

They got back to the house unnoticed. Overman reached New York that night, and sailed two days afterward.

Lenox was in all its glory. Dinners, tableaux, tub parades, tennis, flirtations, scandals, and autumn foliage. How those everlasting hills, as they stand shoulder to shoulder before the Lord, must chuckle at the little human midgets below that squirm and plan and fidget and worry in their efforts to be always amused and excited!

Edgar had arrived, and he and Rosalie went everywhere. It was charming to see, when any question arose as to what to do next, the way in which she would look up into his face with an air of fond dependence, as if his word were law. As for him,

he sailed in a motionless sea of happiness where the wind was always fair; nothing could equal his pride when he saw the respectful, unspoken admiration of the men, or when some woman would say: "I've no doubt she is as good as she is handsome; in which case, you have found a treasure."

Mrs. Barnard had been about socially a good deal, but until the present time she had been more *in* society than *of* it. Nowadays no entertainment was complete without her. Mrs. Worcester had arrived, and, as she always liked to have somebody "in tow," as she expressed it, was very kind to both of them.

She gave them a large dinner when she first arrived, and sent for Edgar beforehand to hear his views. When he entered the room the dear old lady rushed at him with both hands outstretched.

"Now, there is no use," she began, "to say anything more about your engagement; you are going to be tremendously happy, of course, and if you are not it won't be your fault. You won't lead quite so domestic a life as you would had you married the woman I should have picked out for you; but you have got the most beautiful woman I have ever seen; and, if she is not an actress, it is evident she cares for you. Now, what I want to see you about is this: Who do you wish to take in to dinner? You can't have me—I am to be piloted to my humble seat by 'His Darkness.' I mean the Turkish minister; I call him that because he is the blackest-looking thing, for a man who washes, I ever saw. There will be plenty of pretty girls. Now there is Miss Edgeworth, a newspaper belle. How would you like her?"

"What is a newspaper belle?" Edgar asked.

"Oh, a pretty girl whose reputation for being a belle has been made by the newspapers; who receives no more, sometimes less, attention than other girls, but is always mentioned at great length by the reporters, and her picture always printed—partly because she is one of the few they have ever heard of, and they feel on safer ground, and partly because her mother is more affable and accessible to newspaper men than other mothers. Well, you don't seem to fancy her. How would Miss Fulton do? She is a girl of innumerable virtues, and but one vice—that is, her religion."

"Is not that a little startling?" inquired Edgar.

"Yes," Mrs. Worcester rattled on, "but it's true; her religion is to her a form of dissipation. She must have a

cathedral; she must have subdued colored lights; she must have an organ whose grand music rolls up and down her spinal column till she shivers; she must have every sense filled to overflowing; then she kneels down and thinks of herself and dreams dreams."

"I have never met a woman like that," remarked Edgar.

"Yes, you have, but you did not know it," replied the old lady. "Never mind, there is no use talking to you about women. In your present condition they are all the same to you—but one, and she is different. Come, and I will put you between two old frumps with your ladylove opposite. Then your attention won't be distracted; you can gaze and worship, and worship and gaze, throughout the whole dinner. Gracious heavens, what a tiresome world it is!"

However, there was a girl, a Miss Stanton, present on that occasion that did attract Edgar's attention from Rosalie a number of times. She was tall and slender, not thin, with a face of unearthly beauty. Her eyes seemed to be large peepholes made for angels to look through. Edgar could not help fancying that she had come from above, on some message of love, just for to-night, and to-morrow would be home again among those more worthy to be with her. But the moment he caught Rosalie's glance and smile his memory of the other was gone, and he reveled in her sumptuous grace.

After dinner Edgar had determined to have a chat with Mrs. Worcester; but as he entered the drawing-room he found himself standing by the side of a Mrs. Courrington to whom he had been presented before dinner. She

said in a chatty but very low voice: "Come into the other room and talk to me." And Edgar, slightly surprised, offered her his arm and went. When she had seated herself comfortably she said:

"I hear you're very clever, and, as I am bored to death, I am curious to know you. Of course, I have a dear, delightful husband, but he seldom scintillates, and of course I have the prettiest and best children in the world, but I can't say they amuse me very much; you may. Besides, like every one else, I am crazy to know the man who is engaged to that ravishing Mrs. Barnard."

Edgar did not answer. When he realized that this woman had calmly brought him in there by a sheer capacity to do what other women wait to be asked to do, he was distinctly nettled. He was quite well aware

that to the others in the drawing-room it had appeared as if he had purposely singled out Mrs. Courrington and asked her to come with him, instead of the reverse.

"You must not mind," she continued, "if I am a little cross to-night, as I am suffering agonies. This dress I am wearing arrived from New York just before dinner, and is so tight that it took the combined efforts of three maids to get me into it, and I am so compressed at the waist that I feel like an overflowing cornucopia. Positively, I feel as if I were bubbling out of my gown."

Just then in walked Rosalie on the arm of a stranger. Coming up to them, she spoke to Edgar:

"I am very tired to-night. I am going home. May I ask you to put me in my carriage?"

The look that the ladies inter-

changed was as politely hateful as the laws of society allow.

Edgar made his apologies and saw "his happiness" to her carriage.

He came to the conclusion walking home that the existence of such a type as Mrs. Courrington was owing to the efforts on the part of rather clever women to make men too much at their ease. They want a man to feel that there are nearly as few restrictions in talking to them as there would be in a chat with his club friends. They want him to know that with them "*bon camaraderie*" is just as acceptable as sentiment and deference. They expect by this means to get men to talk to them who are too lazy to speak to other women who expect more. In this way they may get quantity, but they do not get quality.

Edgar managed to while away two

very happy weeks. He had by this time regained his health and looks. Rosalie was all that a betrothed woman should be, and he was proportionately pleased. He often wondered what were the doubts he had previously entertained in regard to her.

He returned to town and prepared for his marriage. Rosalie had her trousseau to prepare, and came also.

On the first of November they were married. Mrs. Worcester was resplendent. She met little Ike for the first time, and took a great fancy to him. He, on this day, was the life of it all. He was everywhere, not still a moment. He drank the health of the bride and groom with nearly every one in the room, but, as he gallantly remarked,

"How can man die better than facing fearful odds!" Rosalie attracted

some adverse criticism by dressing in white, like a girl bride; but Edgar had insisted upon it, and in her snow-white gown she looked like a pink rosebud set in the hollow of a lily.

PART III.

SIX months later found them residing in a fine large house in Madison Avenue. They had passed a comparatively pleasant winter. To be sure, Edgar was a little wearied of balls, dinners, and alleged gayeties of all sorts, but Rosalie kept going with nervous energy. They had, until Lent began, hardly spent an evening at home, and during that period of supposed fasting and repentance Rosalie had had some one in to dine almost each night that she had not dined out. Edgar had, mildly remonstrated but without success. It seemed to him that Rosalie's disinclination to

pass an evening at home alone with him was sad and pitiful, but he made a thousand and one excuses for her, and promised himself a happier future when the novelty of her married life, her house, and her new friends had worn off.

In truth, in her heart she was already tired of him. She was tired of acting the part of a devoted wife. She knew that he did not understand her, and she was weary of trying to appear to be the woman he fondly imagined her. They had no tastes in common, and she found his very honesty a reflection upon herself; it grated upon her. If she were irritable he was always patient and forgiving; not in any way exasperating, except to a woman who knew herself to be inexcusable, and also absolutely indifferent. She said to him one day:

"Oh, if you would only go out and

do something wrong and then come back and be forgiven it would be so refreshing!"

"Do something wrong! Why what would you have me do?" he asked, looking both puzzled and sad.

"Oh, make desperate love to some other woman—anything that would make you less spotless. There is too long a stretch of dazzling white in your character. My eyes need a few oases in the way of blemishes to rest upon."

Edgar bent downward and kissed her. "I am so glad you don't mean what you say," he murmured. "Sometimes your chaff frightens me. Chaff, I think, is a miserable conversational trick at best, either implying more than you mean, or less, or saying what you do not think; is all folly, and dangerous folly. It is much better to stick

close to the truth; then every one knows where you stand."

Rosalie would have liked to have slapped him. It was just the sort of speech she detested. Besides, he could not understand that what she had said she really meant.

His love for and his belief in her palled upon her. She had at times an almost uncontrollable desire to shock him, and nothing but the thought that perhaps in the near future she might need his love and belief to stem a tide of scandal made her refrain from gratifying herself.

She knew that to-morrow Overman's six months' absence would be over. She had received a telegram from him that morning, simply saying, "To-morrow afternoon at three," and signing his name.

She was alone when he arrived, and was unfeignedly glad to see him, but

when he made a motion as if expecting something warmer in the way of a welcome, she raised her hand before his face and cried: "*Pas si vite, monsieur, pas si vite.* And now, before you tell me of your travels, which I know you're dying to do, and before I tell you how much I'm in love with my husband, and also before you tell me that in your case absence has made the heart grow fonder, let me give you a command. Don't you send me any telegrams, and don't you write me any notes that could not be posted on the façade of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. I am not an independent actress living alone in a flat, I am not your mother, and I am not the girl to whom you are engaged, and I don't propose to wake up some morning to find my throat cut from ear to ear by a justly jealous husband."

Overman laughed heartily. Oh, he felt it was so good to be with her again, to hear her voice once more! How well they understood one another, these two!

"I had no idea you had Irish blood in your veins," he exclaimed; "but 'she who must be obeyed' shall be obeyed on condition that I see so much of her, I have no need to write."

Never before had Rosalie in her intercourse with Overman been so graciously abandoned. She teased him, laughed at him, led him on, and drove him back. She was in her element—controlling a man. After he had been there some time she rose, and, taking from a table a woman's riding whip, began tapping him gently on the head; then, as a happy thought struck her, she gradually wound it round and round in his hair until the lash was

firmly entangled; then with little jerks and pulls she made him bow, then kneel, and in extravagant language acknowledge her sovereignty. He had hardly risen to his feet when the door opened and Edgar entered. Rosalie dropped the whip. He stood for a moment, looking more surprised than angry. Before he could speak Rosalie called to him:

"Oh, do come here and help us! Mr. Overman has this whip caught in his Hyperion curls, and I can't get it out, and neither can he, and I am almost dead with laughter."

Anything more ridiculous than the appearance of Overman can hardly be imagined. There he stood in the center of the room with this long whip dangling in front of his face, and his eyes blinking as the hair brushed by them, while this novel pendant swung slowly to and fro.

Edgar stepped forward without a word of greeting, and with the utmost dignity attempted to release him. Rosalie, as she saw the picture, found that it was too much for her sense of the ridiculous, and sat down, convulsed with laughter.

After a few moments of futile endeavor Edgar remarked very sedately: "I am afraid this is impossible, Mr. Overman, unless you let me cut off a lock of your hair."

"Oh, do, John! do cut it off, and keep it in a locket!" And Rosalie went off into another paroxysm of laughter.

The men paid no attention to her. Overman simply said quietly: "I wish you would—it is the only way."

Edgar took out his knife, which contained scissors, and Overman was free.

"Oh, what a barber you would make, John! Please, give up the law,

and become a barber! Won't you buy a bottle of our hair restorer, Mr. Overman? Only fifty cents a bottle, and a sure cure!"

Before this could go any further John turned and said to the other man: "I came uptown early to take Mrs. Edgar for a drive, and if you will excuse her I will ask her to get ready."

There was a little ring in his voice that made Rosalie quiet in a moment.

"How delightful!" she exclaimed. "And thank you so much, Mr. Overman, for your little entertainment."

Arthur somewhat sheepishly got his hat and stick, and bowed himself out. He muttered all the way home. He struck with his cane at an inoffensive cat in such a vicious way that the poor animal, with one mighty yowl, fled for its life.

"To look like a fool before your suc-

cessful rival—yes, that's very pleasant. He laughs best who laughs last, however. I wonder what he thinks. He is a gentleman, that's sure," and so on to the door of his club went this man who might have been a gentleman himself, but was not.

It was characteristic of John Edgar that throughout the long drive with his wife he never referred to the incident in any way.

Two days after this meeting Arthur called again. He was in far from a pleasant mood.

"May I ask," he inquired the moment he caught sight of Rosalie, "why you put me in such a ludicrous position before your husband the other day, and why you laughed so uproariously when you saw me there? The unkindness of it amounted to bad taste."

"My friend," she answered, "your

being in that position was an accident. I laughed because the situation was screechingly funny, and because—" here she came nearer to him, "because it was the natural thing to do had the circumstances been otherwise. People don't laugh heartily when they are discovered doing wrong; if they do when they are caught under peculiar but not conclusive circumstances it is apt to disarm suspicion. I generally have a common-sense reason for what I do. I was in hopes you had discovered that fact by this time. One is taught to think of men as clever, but, you may have remarked it, they are never clever but in one way; if it's their profession, that is one way; if it's information and knowledge, which passes for cleverness, that is another way; if it's their ability to hide their stupidity, that's another way still; but generally clever and equal to all

sudden emergencies, as women are—never!"

As Overman, after his visit—which he shortened at Rosalie's request—went down the stoop Edgar came up; they both bowed frigidly. Rosalie, who was looking out of the window, saw it all, and braced herself for the breeze she knew was coming.

When he entered the room he stood looking at her for a moment, and then said:

"Pardon my interfering with anything you see fit to do, but may I ask whether you intend to see as much of Mr. Overman in the future as you do now? It seems to me, that for a married woman to receive the same man two or three times a week in the absence of her husband is two or three times too much."

She looked up at him in a disinterested, patient way, and said:

"Were you speaking to me, dear?"

"I was."

"I'm so sorry; I was thinking of something else. What did you say?"

Edgar, with his voice a little more strained, repeated what he had said. Rosalie was well aware that anything repeated always loses point and force.

When he had finished she looked quite pleased, and said: "Now, John, this is quite a coincidence. I was talking to Mr. Overman about cleverness—expressing my opinions, in fact—and here you come and give me another new idea—that is, that there are some sorts of cleverness that are more appallingly depressing than any sort of stupidity."

Here she paused for a moment, and, looking at him slyly, added:

"John, you are clever in a way, dear. Now, as for Mr. Overman, he is an old friend of mine. I knew him long

before I knew you. (How a husband always hates to hear this statement!) He has been absent for six months; he comes to see me twice, where, had he not been away, he would have been here fifty times; and yet you object. I like him very much, but I hope you won't permit my liking him to interfere with my loving you; but if you nag me about him, I am afraid it will."

This was all the satisfaction Edgar got; but the iron had entered, and from this day he began to change.

The following morning Rosalie wrote to Arthur as follows:

"I told you not to write to me. I did not say I would not write to you. It is a pity if women can not have some privileges denied to men. You are not to come and see me any more, except at stated intervals and on due notice. Now, don't get cross. Wait

a minute. Are you fond of pictures? I believe you are. How strange! I am going this afternoon to see the pictures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, at three o'clock.

"I was going to write you a longer letter, but it seems to me that I have written all I had to say."

They met, and continued to meet in this way a number of times. Rosalie never took her own carriage to drive up to the museum, but always went in a cab. Sometimes they took long walks.

One day Edgar stopped at the club and joined a cluster of men at one of the windows. Old Dougan, who had always been a failure with women, never missed an opportunity to say or to imply something to their disparagement. When he turned and saw Edgar he cried:

"Hello! Where do you keep your-

self all the time? Busy making money for a lovely wife to spend, I suppose. Pity you are not as fond of pictures as your friend Overman! At least, I imagine he is a friend of yours."

"I am fond of pictures," answered Edgar, somewhat stiffly, "so there is nothing to pity. Why do you think Mr. Overman is?"

"Because," replied the other, "I have seen him up at the Metropolitan twice with Mrs. Edgar, and they seemed very much engrossed—with themselves," he added *sotto voce*.

Without the wink of an eye or the twitch of a muscle Edgar answered:

"You're quite right, Arthur is a friend of mine; and I have asked him to take her to the galleries on several occasions, as I have no time."

"Gad!" interrupted a Mr. Weston; "you should be a pedestrian, too.

Overman and Mrs. Edgar are great on long walks in the park."

"Yes, indeed," said Edgar, "I know they are. At the doctor's suggestion, on account of my wife's health, I asked them always to walk home. How difficult it is to find a man who can tell you something you don't know!" Here he turned on his heel and walked away.

When he had gone a listener to the foregoing conversation remarked:

"I advise you men to be a little careful how you talk to Edgar. Neither of you is a lion tamer, and I imagine when he is aroused he is apt to be savage."

Then some one asked that fateful question that begins, punctuates, and ends all club chats, "What'll you have?" and the subject of conversation changed.

Take five men in a club corner;

enter the sixth to announce the sudden death of one of their intimates, and this is what will happen:

"Heard about poor Gaylord?"

"No."

"Dead."

"Nonsense! saw him yesterday."

"Dead, all the same."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

"What'll you have?"

Edgar was stunned by the discovery he had made. He was an extremely sensitive man, and the thought that he—he, of all men—should have his wife's name coupled with another's; that she should have deceived him; that he was being laughed at behind his back, nearly drove him crazy. He walked straight ahead, noticing no one for two hours, then back again along the same street and road. There had always been a

morbid tendency in Edgar's character that had prevented him from taking life very gayly—you might say he was morbidly honest. He had a positive horror for anything like deception; his whole nature shrunk from it as one would from a loathsome reptile. He knew he should never have the same feeling for Rosalie, no matter what happened. So he realized that the best part of his life had passed. He had naturally supposed, never seeing Overman at his house after his talk with his wife, that she had discouraged his coming there, and the fact that he had never forbidden him the house did not in the least alleviate his sufferings. The wound that his love for Rosalie had received seemed to pain him less at this time than the overwhelming shame he felt. On his return he went directly to her. The decided *tendresse* she had always

entertained for Arthur Overman had grown of late, becoming something of a more serious nature, while her lukewarm affection for John had cooled in proportion. This change in her feelings made her a little defiant and reckless, but she never expected nor wanted any explosion that would alter her present position.

The moment she saw John and detected a look in his face she had never seen before she knew something was wrong.

He was pale, and there was a metallic sound to his voice as he spoke.

"I understand from outsiders that, notwithstanding what I said to you the other day, you have been meeting Mr. Overman at the Metropolitan Museum, and walking with him in the park. I had expected you would have respected my wishes. Now, I want to say very frankly that there

is nothing I am so proud of as my good name and yours; and I do not propose to have either of them the subject of any scandalous comment. I therefore forbid you to see anything of Mr. Overman, either here or elsewhere, and you will kindly tell him so."

Rosalie's face was white with fury. John would hardly have recognized her. For a moment she looked at him silently; then, remembering that a lost temper means a lost cause, she threw up her hands in feigned delight and laughed mockingly.

"'Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed that he is grown so great' in his own estimation? This is amusing. You heard I accidentally met Mr. Overman in the Museum of Art. Where would you have him meet me? In some improper place? We were seen walking in the park. Where would

you have had us walk? In Mott Street? I hope your informant mentioned we were walking on our feet, not on our heads. And on this startling information you come to me and prattle about your good name and your fair fame, and other such nonsense. If you want to forbid Mr. Overman the house and his speaking to me you may do so. I will not. When a woman promises to love, honor, and obey her husband it is presupposed he keeps his senses. No one can love, honor, and obey an idiot. Now, John Edgar, take my advice. If you don't want gossip and scandal, let the matter drop."

Edgar looked at her as he might had she stabbed him; his heart wept tears of blood, and Love lay dead at his feet.

"I shall notify him myself," he said at last, and turned to go.

"Wait—don't go!" she called. "I

should like to know what will happen if after your frigid note to him and your bombastic speech to me we still meet and speak. Will you then have a nice old-fashioned duel, and make yourself the laughingstock of every one?"

His only answer was, "The future will take care of itself."

After he had gone Rosalie sat for a long time thinking. She had the uncomfortable sensation of partial defeat in the discussion she had had with her husband. Never before had she been unable to manage him. Though she had kept her temper, she felt sure she had gone too far. But soon her old reliance in herself returned. He should be brought back to his senses, he should be punished. It never dawned on her that her power over him had in any way waned.

Going to her desk she wrote to Overman:

"I want to see you immediately and alone. Where can we meet? Send the answer to Maillard's. Things are very squally."

She then walked down to Maillard's, sent the note, and waited there for the answer. When it came she tore it open and read with astonishment:

"Come to my rooms now—third floor. I will be on the lookout."

Rosalie had never done anything so dangerous as this before, but there was no time to lose. He must be put on his guard, and they must formulate some plan of action.

Overman's rooms were in a large apartment house where many lived. Ladies of all degrees were constantly going in or out. There had been nothing very wicked in her intercourse with Arthur hitherto, and it was the knowledge of this fact that made her bold and inclined her to

look upon this step as a great adventure. She did not use the elevator. When she reached the third floor she found him waiting for her in the hall. Quickly he ushered her into his sitting-room, and no one saw.

"What is wrong?" he inquired, looking worried.

But Rosalie was too much interested looking about her, inspecting the pictures, examining all the little *lares* and *penates* of a bachelor's sanctum.

"It is a wonder to me that men ever marry," she exclaimed. "You are certainly not rich, but you have here everything to make you comfortable, and your independence as well."

"Well, never mind that now; tell me what has happened."

"Well, simply this," she explained: "he" (they always spoke of John as "he") "has discovered that we have

met in the Metropolitan and walked in the park, and he is as much upset by it as if he had surprised me—" then she hesitated, and he added:

"Here, for instance."

"Exactly," and she laughed. "We are not, according to his orders, to meet again under any circumstances. You are to be forbidden the house, and he is going to write you to that effect. In fact, my liege lord is on the war path."

Overman looked grave for a moment.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Just as I please."

"Well, what do you please?"

"To see you as often as I like."

"Good!" he cried; "we will manage it somehow," and he stretched out his hand and took hers, gently drawing her nearer.

In the meantime Edgar had gone to his club. Though a bright, warm day, he felt as if it were intensely cold. His blood seemed like iced water. Three times he began a note to Overman, and three times he tore it up. At last he thought to himself:

"What is the use? I can't write; I'll go and tell him what I want, and why I want it. It will be better in many ways."

It was at the moment that Arthur had taken Rosalie's hand that the door was thrown open, and the colored janitor, with his back to the room, said:

"Step in here and wait for a moment, and I will tell him, sir."

Edgar entered before Arthur could move. When he recognized his wife every muscle in his body became paralyzed. For a moment no one moved, no one spoke; slowly Arthur's fingers

relaxed their grasp and her hand fell to her side. Had they been convicted of breaking all the Ten Commandments they could not have looked more guilty.

"I came," faltered Edgar, his voice trembling so he could hardly speak, but looking Arthur squarely in the eyes, "I came to say something to you—that, now, there is no need to say." And with a face drawn with anguish he walked slowly away.

The instant he disappeared Arthur sprang to the door and closed it. Then they stood and gazed into each other's eyes.

Arthur began nervously pacing up and down the floor, clasping and unclasping his hands.

"The fool!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't he write?"

"Why didn't you leave word you were out to the man downstairs?"

Rosalie asked, with a little shudder she could not suppress.

Arthur stopped short in his walk, and, without answering her question, asked:

"What will he do now, do you suppose? Arrange to try and kill me?"

"No."

"Kill himself?"

"No."

"What, then?"

"Just die," she murmured.

"Nonsense!"

"But he will; I know him. It will kill him. No, don't touch me; let me go." And Rosalie tore herself away from him and was gone.

There are no words to fitly describe John Edgar's condition. The man was dead, though he walked and talked; the outward evidence of life he still retained, but the spiritual man had

died. He went home that night and found Rosalie pale but defiant.

"Do you believe me guilty of any greater wrong than you saw?" she asked.

"No, or I should not be here," he answered in a dull, mechanical way.

"Then I don't see that any very great harm has been done."

"All the harm that can be done has been done—for me. The rest makes little difference. To-morrow I shall place fifty thousand dollars to your credit. You may take a house anywhere you please for the summer. I am going abroad. You will please say I have gone on business which it will take some time to arrange. There is no need for more scandal than necessary."

"You mean to leave me?"

"Yes."

"Forever?"

"Perhaps," and Edgar's mouth twitched.

"Is your love for me entirely a thing of the past?"

"As if it had never been," he answered slowly.

"Good-night, then," and Rosalie walked steadily past him.

"Good-by," said Edgar, bowing low.

That night she cried as she had never cried before. In fact, she never remembered to have cried but twice, and then from futile rage.

No tears came to the burning eyes of the man; all the springs of feeling in him had dried up.

For the two or three days he was compelled to remain he never saw her once. However, he could not disabuse his mind of the idea that all the world knew of his disgrace, and to his morbidly sensitive nature this was exquisite torture.

He went to his club one afternoon to get his letters; as he was walking out a friend called him over to a bunch of men, saying to the others:

"Here's a man that will know who wrote

"'The chain of wedlock is so heavy that it takes two to carry it—*sometimes three.*'"

Edgar turned a shade whiter, and answering, "I don't know," left them.

The question had been put without any intention that it should bear a personal point, but to him, in his present condition, he took it as evidence that the whole world was laughing at him.

He went to his office and drew a new will, leaving all to his wife "on condition"—but that condition was never inserted. He drew another, bequeathing her everything with no proviso. Then he sailed.

All that summer he wandered from

one quiet place to another, avoiding every one. He would sit long hours in the sun, gazing and dreaming, over and over again, the six happy months of his life, the first part of which life had been cold and gray, then for a brief time warm and red, and now once again cold—and dead. He wondered if his mind was not slipping away from him; and in a measure it was. He had a way of sweeping his fingers along anything dusty, then, looking at them in a dull way, would mutter:

"Dust to dust, ashes to ashes."

Autumn came and found John Edgar frailer and more sunken-eyed than ever, but he did not die.

One day he turned his face to the sky and cried:

"O God, why can't I die? Why can't I die? Take me away! O God, take me to you!"

Many a time he looked at his pistol longingly, and fingered it lovingly. One morning as he stood before his mirror he put the muzzle to his temple and smiled as he felt the cold of the steel. But this means of escape was not for him. He thought it would make trouble for her; he knew it would create a scandal, and the world would surely guess the true cause of his act.

As the cold weather came on he felt it more and more, but instead of going south, where it was warmer, he went farther and farther north. There was no imprudence he could be guilty of that he was not. He had never consulted a physician, and the one or two stray acquaintances he had involuntarily made, when they suggested that he should, were firmly rebuffed.

December saw him in St. Petersburg. One evening, as he sat in his

apartments with bowed head and folded hands, he talked aloud to himself, a habit he had contracted, as all people who are very much alone often do.

"God has forgotten me!" he cried. "I can not wait. This is too slow; I must work a little faster."

Slipping on his fur overcoat he went out. It was bitterly cold, and an icy wind raced through the narrow streets. He looked up at the stars and wondered if one of them might not be heaven. Slowly he made his way to his stable, and, to the astonishment of his groom, ordered out a light sleigh and one horse.

"Shall I go with you?" the groom asked.

"No," replied Edgar. "I prefer to go alone."

He drove directly out of the city,

and when he was beyond its myriad lights, on an unfrequented road, he drew his horse up and quickly slipped his warm fur overcoat off and pounded it beneath his feet. Then on again through the bitter night he drove for hours. The few people he passed wondered, as they saw the white shirt of his evening dress, whether their eyes had not deceived them. As he neared the city again he with incredible difficulty managed to get his coat on. But on reaching his stable and driving in he found it was impossible to move. He could not get out of the sleigh. The frightened groom called another, and together they brought him home in a close carriage. He was put to bed. The servants wanted to call a doctor, but he commanded them not to, saying:

"I am only a little cold; I shall be all right in the morning."

But in the morning he was far worse, unable to give orders of any sort; so they sent for a physician.

On the following day he saw the doctor standing by his bedside.

"Am I very ill?" he asked quickly.

"Yes," he was told.

"Shall I die if I make no effort to live?"

"You must try," the doctor said, with a look of surprise.

"But if I don't?" continued Edgar, persistently.

"That would be fatal."

"Then," said Edgar, speaking with great difficulty, "cable my wife, Mrs John Edgar, New York, to come to me, that I am dying, and I need to see her before I go. Beseech her to come." He fell back, exhausted.

Two weeks passed, and Rosalie came. Constantly while she was on

the way Edgar would ask the doctor feverishly:

"Will I be gone before she comes?"

And he always answered:

"No, I think not. Were you as anxious to live as you are to see her, there might be no need for you to go at all."

And Edgar smiled.

When Rosalie arrived at the house the doctor met her before she had even taken off her wraps. He looked at her critically, and thought what a *furore* her beauty would make in the Winter City. Then he spoke:

"Is the man's death necessary to your happiness or to his?"

"I don't understand you," she said guardedly, and with a look of keen distrust.

"Do you want me to save him?" he asked.

"That I believe is your profession,"

she answered coldly, and, passing him, mounted the stairs.

When she saw John she was shocked, and almost sorry she had come. Why bring her here to see him die? It could do no good. She hated illness, she hated death; it was all so sad, even when you did not care.

But Edgar reveled in her presence; his poor eyes followed her everywhere. It was on the seventh day after her arrival that he began to sink rapidly. He lay for long hours in a sort of trance, and when he waked he smiled as if he had been away to see his God, and knew that all was well.

At midnight, while Rosalie was in the room, through the great stillness of the winter's night she heard the door bell ring, then silence, and the opening and closing of a heavy door.

In a moment a nurse softly tiptoed into the room and whispered:

"There is a gentleman downstairs who says he must see you."

Rosalie's heart gave a great bound. Glancing at Edgar, she saw he was in one of his trances, and, bidding the nurse take her place, slipped away.

When she entered the room there stood Overman. Though half suspecting it, she was startled.

"Man," she cried, "are you crazy?"

"Perhaps," he said, advancing. "I am in love, as you know, which is much the same thing."

"Do you know that he is dying upstairs?"

"Well, I did not kill him."

"Perhaps we both did.—No, don't kiss me now," as she pushed him away. "I hate it."

Just then the door opened and the nurse entered, saying:

"Please, Mr. Edgar says for you and the gentleman to come upstairs; he wants to see you."

Rosalie and Arthur were for the moment panic stricken, but Rosalie, recovering quickly, said:

"Go back and tell him the gentleman has gone; he came to the wrong house by mistake."

She returned in a moment and said, with a frightened look in her face:

"Mr. Edgar says that the gentleman is Mr. Overman, and that he knows that he is here with you—that he has seen you both."

"Seen us both!"

"Yes, while he seemed sleeping."

They were stunned. At last Rosalie, turning to the nurse, said:

"Very well; you go back to him."

When Arthur recovered himself he exclaimed:

"I won't go."

"You must," she replied.

"Well, I won't. It is nothing but a dying man's craziness."

"It is a dying man's wish," she said. And, taking him by the hand, led him to where her husband lay.

As they entered, John smiled sweetly.

"Don't be frightened. Come in, come near to me. I am not angry, I am only glad you care for her so much to have followed her here."

Then, as they stood on either side of him, he gazed first at the one and then at the other.

Slowly and feebly he raised his white, wan arm, and, pulling Rosalie's head down to his lips, he kissed her. Then, gently pushing his other hand along the bedclothes, he slipped it

into the strong brown hand of Arthur, and, speaking almost in a whisper, said:

"I bid you love her as I did."

Then this soul, having spoken, went back to its God.

THE END.

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